

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE
STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second-Class Matter at the New York Post Office, November 7, 1898, by Frank Tausey.

No. 399.

NEW YORK, JANUARY 24, 1906.

Price 5 Cents.

THE TWENTY SILENT WOLVES;

OR, THE WILD RIDERS OF THE MOUNTAINS.

By RICHARD R. MONTGOMERY.



Paul was flung on the ground also and secured, while gags were placed on each of the prisoners. A bright light then glared out from the turret of the mansion, and another pistol shot rang out on the night air.

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THE WILD RIDERS OF THE MOUNTAINS AND THE TWENTY-THREE WOLVES



As they rode on the ground also and reached while they were going to each of the
A light light was shed out from the corner of the mountain, and
and a light that came out on the right side.

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The Twenty Silent Wolves

OR,

The Wild Riders of the Mountains.

BY RICHARD R. MONTGOMERY.

CHAPTER I.

THE SILENT WOLVES APPEAR.

"Hunt them down like wolves. Shoot them, cut them down with the sword, hang them up to the trees, but don't show mercy to any rascal of them who speaks English!"

The person who thus declaimed was a tall, stout man of fifty, wearing the garb of an English colonel, and one glance at his resolute, cruel, and angry countenance was enough to show that he meant all he said.

He was addressing a large body of horse and foot soldiers drawn up in line before a barracks, and the principal officers in charge of the little army were gathered around him.

Some of the soldiers who heard the brutal order cheered in response, many of the officers responded by nods of approval, but some of them looked grave and shook their heads as if they meant to say:

"Our colonel is going too far."

The scene was presented in the west of Ireland toward the close of the eighteenth century.

A short time previous an expedition had set out from France to aid the Irish revolutionists in the struggle then going on in that unhappy country.

France was at war with England at the time, and the expedition, according to the law of nations, was a perfectly legitimate one.

A fierce storm burst over that expedition, and only a portion of the ships forming it reached the coast of Ireland.

The small French army thus landing pushed on bravely through the country for a time, winning two or three battles over the English, but the furious storm scattered reinforcements, and the devoted little army was at length compelled to give way before the overpowering force the English brought against them.

A great number of the retreating French could not regain the coast again to embark for their own country, and they scattered over the mountains in the west of Ireland.

The people of the country were thoroughly devoted to the French, but they were almost powerless to aid them, save by offering them shelter and food.

As the Irish peasants were deprived of arms, and as they were not well organized, they could not form an army to oppose the English, but they harassed their enemies in every possible manner.

When the French were fitting out their expedition in their own country they selected many young officers who could speak the English language, with a view of drilling the undisciplined Irish on landing in that country.

Many young Irishmen who were exiled in France at the time and serving in the French army joined the expedition, well knowing that if taken prisoners and recognized they would be put to death as rebels to England.

Some of the English commanders and magistrates went even so far as to condemn and hang Frenchmen who spoke English fluently, while the least touch of the brogue was instant death to the unfortunate prisoner.

When the French first landed and gained some victories the English were not so severe, but when the latter found that their enemies did not receive the strong reinforcements expected they became cruel and savage in the treatment of their foes.

Colonel Barclay, the man who thus addressed the troops under him, was one of the most vindictive and cruel of all the tyrants who flourished in Ireland at the time.

Soon after the retreat of the French, and when he knew that they could not make a stand again, his constant cry was:

"Hunt them down like wolves!"

His brutal soldiers soon caught up the cry, and it rang over mountain and valley.

When the helpless peasants would hear that cry in the dead of night they would sigh and mutter:

"Heaven help the poor fellow who is caught to-night, as Barclay's wolves are out again!"

The brutal hunters did not have it all their own way, however, as they were often assailed in mountain passes, and put to rout by the scattered bands who sought refuge in the fastnesses.

Resistance to the tyrants grew weaker and weaker, however, and scarcely a day passed that some unfortunate French prisoner, who claimed justice in the English tongue, that did not suffer death.

Colonel Barclay resided in a splendid mansion about a mile outside the garrison town.

He held a large estate, and he was a magistrate also.

The last title gave him the power of life or death over all the unfortunates who were brought before him.

One evening about two months after the retreat of the French, and when that part of the country was pretty well subdued, a party of English troopers rode up to the mansion bearing a young prisoner with them.

The young prisoner was a tall, stalwart fellow, wearing a tattered French uniform, and his face bore marks of having been engaged in a recent struggle.

Colonel Barclay met the troopers at the door as he cried out in savage tones:

"What is this you have got now?"

"Another of the wolves, colonel," answered the sergeant in command of the troops.

"I am a French officer," cried the prisoner, speaking in English, "and I demand to be treated as an honorable enemy."

"Tush, tush!" cried Colonel Barclay, with a brutal sneer. "You cannot humbug me with such nonsense. Did he resist, sergeant?"

"Like fury, colonel. He slew two of our men, and wounded a third before we could overpower him."

"Then why didn't you cut him to pieces?"

"He surrendered at last, sir, and then claimed that he was a French officer."

"And so I am," cried the prisoner, "and I claim fair treatment at your hands."

"And you will get fair treatment, you rascally Irish rebel. Out with him and hang him upon that big tree at the side of the lawn."

The prisoner again protested that he was a French officer, giving his name and the regiment to which he belonged, but Colonel Barclay ordered him away, crying:

"Hunt them down like wolves. Hanging is too good for the brutes!"

The young prisoner was led away by the rough soldiers, and his body was soon after dangling from a limb of the large tree at the side of the lawn.

The troopers retreated to refresh themselves soon after playing the parts of hangmen, and the colonel retired to his dining-room, where he had left a party of his brother officers, muttering:

"That's the way I'd like to serve all the infernal Frenchmen, as I have good reason to hate the whole race."

About fifty troopers were stationed in and around the mansion at the time, as the brutal colonel feared that some of his desperate enemies would assail him at night if not properly guarded.

About an hour after the unfortunate officer was left dangling on the tree, and while Colonel Barclay was still enjoying wine with his friends, a sergeant appeared before him, saying:

"Colonel, I beg to report that the prisoner's body has disappeared."

"What do you mean, sirrah?" demanded the colonel, springing up in a rage.

"Someone has cut it down from the tree and taken it off, sir."

"I'll put the scoundrels to death who dared to touch that body. Out with a file of men and make a thorough search for it."

The enraged colonel then gave orders for several other small parties to hasten out in the neighborhood, and he continued, crying:

"And if you should find the body in any house around here, drag all those living in the place here to me, and I'll make an example of them."

The troopers sought for the body of the young prisoner that night in every direction, but it could not be found.

A stricter search was made on the following day, Colonel Barclay ordering his men to examine the graveyards and the fields around, yet no trace could be found of the body of the young prisoner.

Days and weeks passed away, and still no trace of the missing body could be found.

No more prisoners were caught by the troopers, although the peasants were now and again startled by the terrible cry:

"Hunt them down like wolves!"

While the hunted men did not show their hands against their enemies in open warfare, Colonel Barclay and others of his kind had reason to know that the rebels were not idle.

It soon became evident that a gang of daring and desperate horse thieves infested the neighborhood.

The brutal colonel had five of his best and swiftest animals stolen from his stables one night in the most mysterious manner, and one of the horses was a black racer, for which he had paid a large amount.

Several other gentlemen of the neighborhood had their very best horses stolen from them also, and it was soon noticed that the sufferers by the horse thieves were all strong advocates of the English rule in Ireland.

Strong parties of mounted men were sent out on all sides, and large rewards were offered for the apprehension of the horse thieves and the recovery of the valuable animals, yet not a single capture was made of either man or beast.

Over thirty valuable animals were thus taken, and one of their owners declared:

"If they were to search all Ireland over, or England itself, the infernal rascal could not have picked out a better lot for speed and bottom."

"Yes, and I would back my Black Wolfe against any horse in the United Kingdom for half my fortune," cried Colonel Barclay, who was more fearfully enraged than if he had lost his right arm in an encounter with the French or the rebels.

The horses were all stolen on the same night, and five of the stable boys having them in charge in different establishments disappeared at the same time.

Strong guards were placed over the different stables thereafter, Colonel Barclay retaining twenty-five troopers to watch his premises alone.

When three weeks passed away after the horse thieves had made the raid, it was generally believed that the animals had been taken to the coast that night and shipped on board a vessel bound for France.

The French and Irish refugees hiding in the mountains were then supposed to be the criminals, and fearful were the threats made against the invaders if they ever landed in Ireland again.

The guards were taken from the stables, the troops were drawn into the garrisons, and peace seemed to reign over that section of Ireland once more.

Colonel Barclay was still fretting and fuming over the loss of his splendid horses, and he also pined to send his troopers out again, singing his well-known cry of:

"Hunt them down like wolves!"

One night the peasant at the foot of the mountain beheld a weird cavalcade sweeping down the rough path and then on to the high road.

It was a dark night, and the superstitious people who beheld the dark forms gliding along on horseback took them

for the headless riders which they had so often heard about in story.

The trembling peasants could not count the number of the cavalcade, yet they did notice that it glided along in the most silent manner, and that the hoofs of the horses did not resound on the hard roadway, or on the steep mountain paths above.

On through a village the silent cavalcade swept, and some few of the inhabitants who beheld the riders gliding along declared that they appeared to be more like savage brutes than human beings.

On the following morning at daybreak Colonel Barclay was aroused from his bed by an officer from the garrison, who reported to him, saying:

"The post at Travenne was attacked last night, colonel, by a band of mounted men, all disguised as wolves, and riding on horses as black as jet."

"What nonsense are you telling me?" cried the surprised colonel.

"It is the truth, I assure you, sir. They set on the troops at the post with great fury, and without uttering a single battle cry."

"But the soldiers defeated the rascals, of course?"

"I am sorry to report that they did not, colonel. Our men were all slain except two, who escaped with severe wounds. The rascals then rode away, taking the best arms and munitions they could find with them."

Colonel Barclay was astounded at the intelligence thus conveyed, and he could not believe the story until he rode away to the village with a strong body of troopers.

He then learned from one of the wounded troopers lying there that the report had not been exaggerated.

"How many did they number?"

Such was the question put by the enraged colonel to the wounded trooper.

"I could not say for certain, sir, but they fought like demons, without saying or crying out a single word. Such fiends I never met in battle before, as they didn't give quarter when we called on them, and I wouldn't be alive now only they saw me stretched for dead on the roadside."

The wildest excitement reigned throughout the neighborhood that day, and strong parties of troopers were sent out again to scour the mountains, while out rang the old cry of:

"Hunt them down like wolves!"

CHAPTER II.

A RECRUIT FOR THE WOLVES.

The terrified peasants at the foot of the mountain saw the strange cavalcade sweeping back again that night.

Those who had the courage to look out from their cabin windows beheld the silent horsemen riding up the mountain path in compact order, moving together as if each and all of the horses were driving four abreast under a chariot.

One man declared that the horsemen rode in five ranks, and that the footfalls of the horses could scarcely be heard on the mountain side.

Colonel Barclay was not a believer in ghosts or goblins, and he declared:

"Nonsense, nonsense! It is some of those rascal who are hiding up in the mountain, and they are riding the stolen horses. I'll soon lay a trap for the rascally wolves, and we'll put every one of them to death."

The furious officer did lay several traps for the silent wolves, but he could not ensnare them.

It was fully a week before the silent band swept down from the mountain again, but they did not come from the direction from whence they first appeared.

During the second raid, the Silent Wolves attacked three mansions about four miles from the garrison town, taking away with them and money, arms, and provisions found there.

The houses thus attacked belonged to rich landlords who were bitter against the French and the Irish rebels, and who encouraged Colonel Barclay in his cruel work against the unfortunate prisoners.

Wherever resistance was offered the Silent Wolves put their foes to death, but no insult or injury was tendered to women or children.

The lady of one of the houses thus visited counted the horsemen as they rode away, and she declared that they were just twenty in number, while she continued saying:

"During all my fright, and while I feared that they would put us to death, none of them uttered a single word."

"Could you not recognize any of them," inquired Colonel Barclay.

"How could I, sir, when their faces were covered with a black substance exactly resembling a head of a wolf. Their bodies were all covered in the same way, and their feet and hands looked like the claws of the animal I mentioned."

"Did their leader give no orders, madam?"

"I could not even hear a whisper from them. They moved and acted like beings who knew exactly beforehand what they had to do. If they were demons from the other world I must say that they treated us well enough, save that they robbed us."

Colonel Barclay became more furious than ever over the second raid of the wolves, but he soon cooled down, as he said to himself:

"The rascals will pay me a visit next, and if they do I'll set a trap for them in earnest."

The cunning colonel then announced in public that he would not claim the protection of the troopers in defending his mansion, and he continued, saying:

"I will defend the place with half a dozen of my men-servants, and if they dare come near me they will get a warm reception."

The challenge was given out on all sides by the officers and the men under him, as the colonel believed that the Silent Wolves would soon hear of it.

He was cautious enough, however, to secretly introduce some twenty of his stoutest dragoons into the mansion, and they were all disguised as male servants, being kept secreted in secluded portions of the building.

In the meantime the warlike colonel kept sending out strong parties to scour the woods and mountains in the neighborhood, and to search for secret hiding-places as well.

It seemed impossible that so many men and horses could find a shelter even in the wild hills around.

The colonel also sent forth another challenge in the shape of a printed proclamation, in which he called on the silent riders in the following manner:

"Cowardly cut-throats, you are only able to attack defenseless houses and unarmed people, and then retreat to your lurking places.

"If you have any courage or manhood in you, you cowardly brutes, why not attack some of the armed troopers who go forth to chase you?"

On the following night after the proclamation was issued some thirty of the troopers were riding through a wood about two miles from the garrison, when they were suddenly assailed by the Silent Wolves and put to rout with great slaughter.

The officer in command of the party, who escaped with a sword cut on the cheek, afterward declared:

"We did not hear a sound until they burst on us, firing their pistols as one man. Then on us they charged with the sword without uttering a cry or a word. Such fiendish fighters I never wish to encounter again."

Over a month went by since the Silent Wolves first appeared, and not a single one of them was captured or taken at a disadvantage by the troopers.

Some of the silent riders had been wounded in their encounters, but their friends had always borne them away in safety.

A strict watch was set on many of the stalwart young peasants in the neighborhood, in the hope of tracing their connection with the daring band, yet still even the brutal colonel could not find a clew suspicious enough to warrant him in arresting the suspected parties.

He sent spies around to the taverns in the neighborhood as well, and those spies received instructions to gain favor with the young men of the place, in the hope of betraying them.

About eight o'clock one evening two of the spies entered a tavern on the edge of the town and commenced to make themselves as agreeable as possible.

One of the fellows was well known in the place, and he bore a very fair character among the people, as he had turned out to join the French soon after their landing on the coast.

His name was Paul Rodney. He was a tall, muscular young man of twenty-one, and he was looked upon as a splendid athlete by his friends.

The other spy was a stranger in the place, and he was also a young man of fair proportions.

Paul introduced the stranger to his friends as his cousin, Dan Rodney from Dublin, always adding in a side whisper: "And maybe he isn't one of the right sort."

The exploits of the Silent Wolves was the sole topic of conversation in the tavern that night, and Paul Rodney could not seem to praise the daring riders enough.

"Be this and be that, boys," he remarked, "but it is a pity they don't number two thousand instead of twenty, and they would sweep all the English into the sea. Bad cess to me if I wouldn't like to be one of them."

At that moment a rough-looking peasant lad of eighteen entered the tavern, and he cast a sheepish look at Paul, as he asked, with a very rich brogue:

"Who are ye talking about at all?"

"The brave boys that ride be night, of course," answered the spy.

The simple-looking youth, who was fully as tall as Paul, but not quite so muscular in appearance, rubbed his head as he responded, saying:

"Begob, and sure that's what I come here for; I come from over the mountain side, and I'd give me big toe to join the boys."

"Sure, they wouldn't have the likes of you at all, you ugly omadhoun," retorted Paul, with a sarcastic grin at the rough-looking fellow.

"And why wouldn't they now?"

"Because you would only be good to mind their horses at the best, and how could you ride with them in such order as they go, and fight with swords and pistols in the bargain?"

The simple fellow rubbed his head again, and looked very despondent, as he remarked:

"It is true for you, and sure I'd be no good at all in that way, but I could handle a stick with the next one, I warrant."

Paul Rodney winked at his friends, and the simple-looking stranger winked at the landlord in a peculiar manner, making a slight motion with his right hand at the same time.

After drinking a mug of porter the simple-looking lad addressed the landlord, saying:

"I have money enough to pay for a bed, sur, and could you give me a bite or two before I stretch myself?"

The landlord declared that he could always accommodate those who were able to pay, and he soon led the rough stranger into a back room.

After placing some bread and meat before him, the landlord addressed the stranger in very subdued tones and inquired:

"What's the good word to-night, my boy?"

"So far so good," answered the stranger, "only we want a few stout recruits."

"Why not take Paul Rodney, then?"

"Is he to be relied upon?"

"He is one of the finest riders and the best fighter in the town."

The landlord reflected a few moments before he answered, saying:

"He does talk a great deal, but sure he was out with the French."

"What about that cousin of his?"

"I can't say so much for him, but he appears like a likely lad."

The simple-looking lad appeared to reflect in turn, and he then put several questions to the landlord, whose name was Tom Foley.

About an hour after Paul Rodney was making his way to his home, half a mile out of town, and the other spy was moving into the place.

Paul turned into a narrow lane leading up to his mother's cottage, when the rough-looking country lad suddenly appeared before him, saying:

"Paul Rodney, I want a word with you."

Paul started on hearing the sound of the voice, while he recognized the speaker at the same time.

Drawing back a little, he demanded:

"What do you want with me, my boy?"

"Is it true that you want to join the Silent Wolves?"

Paul stared at the rough-looking youth before him, the more so as he noticed that there was a thorough change in his tone of voice, while he said to himself:

"This must be one of them surely, and he was playing a part in the tavern."

Then loud-mouthed Paul answered in earnest tones, saying:

"It is true that I want to join the Silent Wolves, and are you one of them?"

"I am, and I know what you are."

"What am I?"

"A spy."

Paul started again at the accusation, and the blood rushed to his face as he replied in manly tones:

"It is an infernal lie, whoever you are, and I believe that you are an English spy yourself!"

The rough-looking lad smiled at the accusation, and then responded, saying:

"In any case you will come with me."

"Not until you tell me who you are."

"I tell you that I am one of the Silent Riders, Paul Rodney, and if you are a true man you will follow me up the mountain. If not——"

"I am a true man, and I will follow you," interrupted Paul. "Lead the way up the mountain."

CHAPTER III.

A TRIAL AND SOME TESTS.

Paul Rodney walked on bravely beside his companion, as he inquired:

"How long since you joined the band?"

"We do not answer any questions," replied the stranger, "as we believe in action and not talk."

"You might give a fellow a civil answer when he is going to join you."

"You haven't joined us yet, and when you do you will know all you want."

They had reached a small grove at the moment, and Paul found himself suddenly surrounded by the strange horsemen.

His guide made one motion toward him only, and two of the band sprang at the new recruit and bound his eyes with a handkerchief.

He was then raised on the back of a horse, and away rode the silent troop in the most perfect order.

Paul Rodney could tell as they were speeding up the hill that men rode in front and at each side of him, and that the horses moved as if some very soft material covered their feet, but he could not even hear a whisper from the silent riders.

After riding for about half an hour the new recruit felt that the horse under him was moving down again, and he said to himself:

"I suppose they are going into their hiding place now, and isn't it wonderful how they can keep it a secret so long?"

On reaching a certain point Paul was lifted from his horse again, the bandage was removed from his eyes, and he then found himself in what appeared to be a very large apartment illuminated by several lamps.

When he could take a survey of the scene around him he beheld the troop of strange horsemen drawn up in a square, by which he was inclosed.

The wolfish figures were mounted on their coal-black steeds, each of them held a naked sword at rest, and all the glaring eyes flashed out at him from under their savage masks.

Before the new recruit had much time for reflection one of the Wolves broke silence by addressing him in stern tones, saying:

"Paul Rodney, do you wish to join the Silent Wolves?"

"To be sure I do," was the prompt reply.

"With what object?"

"To fight against the villains that oppress us, of course."

"Paul Rodney," continued the same speaker, "you are suspected of being an English spy."

A merry and a manly smile appeared on the young fellow's face as he replied, saying:

"And so I ought to be, for I am one in one way."

All the Wolves nodded at each other, and every sword was pointed at the young fellow as the voice addressed him again, saying:

"What do you mean, Paul Rodney?"

"I mean that I am now engaged by Colonel Barclay to hunt you down, and that I swore to him that I would."

The wolfish figures nodded at each other again, and their speaker continued, crying:

"Were you honest when you thus pledged yourself to Colonel Barclay?"

"I was not honest to him, but I was honest to you men, as my object was to tell you that he had spies on your track the minute I got in with you. That is the solemn truth, and believe me or not if you like."

"Is that a cousin of yours that goes around with you calling himself Dan Rodney?"

"He is not, for he is a real spy all the way from Dublin."

"How did you find that out?"

"Because I got him drunk one night, and I drew him out by pretending that I was ready to sell myself to Colonel Bar-

clay also. That was how I got in with the colonel, and he engaged me to join you, if I could, and then betray you."

"Are you speaking the truth, Paul Rodney?"

"I am, so help me Heaven."

The speaker of the Silent Wolves placed his hand on his mouth, and then turned to consult in whispers with the men on each side of him.

All of the members of the band present consulted in a similar manner for some minutes.

The speaker then commanded attention by holding up his hands, and then cried:

"Is he a traitor or not?"

Each of the Wolves lowered his sword on the instant, and pointed the weapons at the floor.

The speaker cast his eyes around to observe their motions, and then turned to the recruit, saying:

"We all agree that you are speaking the truth, and we will admit you as a member of our band if you can stand the tests."

"What are the tests, sir?"

The question was scarcely asked by the recruit when five of the horsemen in front of him wheeled aside, and the speaker cried out:

"Can you jump that opening?"

Paul Rodney advanced a few steps, and cast his eyes across the opening as if to measure the distance, when he remarked:

"It is a great leap, but I'd venture to try it if I saw anyone else do it before me."

"If you fall it is certain death," cried the speaker, "and measure the distance well."

Paul advanced to the mouth of the opening and took a more careful survey of the leap, casting his eyes down into what appeared to be a dark abyss at the same time.

He then drew back and shook his head, before he responded in manly tones:

"It is an awful jump, but I am willing to try it if I saw anyone else go before me."

The speaker of the Wolves sprang lightly from his horse on the instant, flung his sword on the floor, and then darted toward the dark opening, crying:

"Follow me, then!"

Paul only waited to see his leader landing safely on the other side of the chasm, when he drew back some steps, as he cried in merry tones:

"Here goes for it, then!"

The Wolves nodded at each other again as they saw that the brave fellow cleared the opening in splendid style, and their speaker made a bound back over the chasm again as he cried:

"Follow me yet."

"I will that!" cried Paul, as he darted after the leader and landed safe among the Wolves.

Nods of approval went round again, and the five horsemen formed the square once more as their leader cried:

"So far so good. I believe you can ride well?"

"Without any boasting I may say that I don't fear to face on horseback where any of you go," was Paul's manly answer.

"Can you use a sword?"

"I never had much practice at that, but I will face the next with a stick."

The speaker of the Wolves had mounted his horse again, and he then made a motion to some of his friends, when two stout blackthorn sticks were flung into the square.

Paul Rodney sprang forward and picked up one of the sticks, as he cried, in merry tones:

"Who'll try a bout with me for love or fun?"

The speaker sprang from his horse again, and seized the other stick, as he replied:

"I will."

Paul was about to commence the battle, when he drew back with a smile, saying:

"You have the better of me now, sir."

"How is that?"

"The skin of the beast on your head will soften the cracks I give you."

The Wolf flung off the upper portion of his disguise on the moment, saying:

"You must have fair play."

Paul smiled again, and nodded in a knowing manner, as he said to himself:

"Begor, it is the lad I met down below, and I'll wager he'll give me enough, for all he looked to be such a fool entirely."

Then at it they went with the force and vigor of two faction leaders at a country fair.

Paul Rodney fought in splendid style, putting forth his best skill, but he could not touch the head of the simple-looking youth before him.

On the other hand, the new recruit received several sharp whacks on the breast and shoulders as he kept muttering to himself:

"This chap is a wonder entirely, but I'll fetch him one tap before long, for the honor of the old town."

Being thus inspired, Paul Rodney went at it again, and he did succeed in giving his opponent a blow of the stick on the side of the head that sent him staggering.

Smiling pleasantly, the rough-looking lad flung down his stick, covered his face again, and then sprang on his horse as he cried:

"You pass that test, also."

Paul drew his breath for a moment or so, and then remarked in merry tones:

"Begor, I hope I won't have to face many more like it, as you could wallop the life out of me if you tried your best."

"Can you use a gun?" inquired the speaker.

"I can that, for I served with the French."

"Will you swear to do as you are ordered by your leader?"

"That I will with a heart and a half, no matter what he tells me to do."

"Then you will go down at once and induce Colonel Barclay to come out on the lawn in front of his house."

Paul Rodney appeared to be a little staggered at the proposition, and a comical grin appeared on his manly face as he answered:

"How in the mischief could I do that at all?"

"That's for you to find out. You cannot be one of the Silent Wolves until you have performed something out of the common. If you have not wit enough to do what you are ordered, you are not fit to be one of us."

"Then, be heavens, I'll try it, if it costs me my life, for I am determined to be one of you."

The speaker of the Wolves made a motion, and the horse-men closed in on Paul, one of them placing a heavy bandage on his eyes again.

He was then lifted on a horse, out moved the cavalcade, and the Silent Wolves swept down toward the valley once more, taking almost a straight line for Colonel Barclay's mansion.

Colonel Barclay was on the alert that night, as he had heard that the Silent Wolves were out on a raid, and he was watching from one of the front windows when he perceived Paul Rodney running up the avenue.

On recognizing the spy the anxious man hastened down to the doorway to meet him, and demanded:

"What is the news now, sirrah?"

"I can't tell you here, sir," was the cautious answer, "as I mustn't be suspected by any of your people inside."

The colonel stepped boldly down toward the lawn as he responded, saying:

"Then come along here and tell me the news."

When they reached a spot some distance from the house the colonel turned on Paul again and demanded:

"Now, what is your news, you rascal?"

"I am one of them, sir."

"When did you join?"

"This very night, sir."

"You know their hiding-place, then?"

"Not yet, sir, as I was led up there blindfolded."

"Do you know any of them?"

"Not at all, sir, as they wouldn't show me their faces until they are sure I am true to them."

"And what are you to do to prove that?"

"Take your prisoner, sir."

"You take me prisoner?" demanded the colonel in savage tones. "What do you mean, you rascal?"

"That's just what they bid me do, sir."

At that moment a sharp report rang out from the house, and Colonel Barclay turned to gaze in the direction, crying:

"What in thunder is the matter in there?"

Then out from a grove near by dashed the silent horse-men, and the brutal colonel was surrounded and overpowered before he could scarcely more than draw his sword.

"Treachery, treachery," he yelled, as he was flung on the ground and a rope passed around his arms.

"Murder, murder," yelled Paul Rodney. "I am a gone man now when they caught me giving you a warning."

Paul was flung on the ground also, and secured, while gags were placed on each of the prisoners.

A bright light then glared out from the turret of the mansion, and another pistol shot rang out on the night air.

The Silent Wolves formed in a square around the prisoners, and they were dragged up the lawn toward the mansion, Colonel Barclay muttering to himself as he ground his teeth in rage:

"Can it be possible that the infernal rascals have taken my house by treachery?"

At that moment a weird-looking old woman darted out of the house, and hastened to meet the Silent Wolves and their prisoners as she cried in thrilling tones:

"Hunt them down like wolves! Cut them down with the sword, shoot them with the guns, and hang them up to the trees, the infernal rebels!"

CHAPTER IV.

A SILENT WOLF SPEAKS.

The weird-looking old woman kept on jeering at Colonel Barclay and denouncing him in wrathful tones until the Silent Wolves led their prisoners up in front of the mansion.

The colonel could see all that was passing around him, and he was more than ever surprised to notice that a dead silence prevailed within the mansion.

He knew that a faithful band of stout troopers and male servants had been keeping watch there within an hour, and he could not comprehend how it was that they offered no resistance as their strange foes advanced up against them.

On reaching the broad pathway in front of the mansion the Silent Wolves drew up in a square, with their prisoners inclosed within it, and the old woman still kept crying:

"Hunt them down like wolves now, why don't you, you cruel tyrant? You would kill and hang the brave men who came here to fight fair against you, and you will soon get a dose of your own medicine."

At a signal from one of the wolves, who held up his hand to silence the old woman, another of the band removed the gag from the colonel's mouth.

When the colonel could use his voice he raised it to its highest pitch, crying:

"Are you all asleep in there, you infernal fools, or have you betrayed me?"

The old hag burst out into an unearthly laugh, and then cried in her shrill tones:

"Call louder and louder, you cruel old tyrant, and not a soul of them will mind you. Oh, it is a glorious sight I saw in there, and——"

"Silence," thundered one of the Wolves, and it was the first time that a member of the band had been heard to speak by strangers in the open air.

The voice thus speaking was hoarse and harsh, and it was soon after directed toward the prisoner, as it cried:

"Colonel Barclay, you need not waste your breath in calling on your men, as they are all our prisoners now."

"I do not believe you, rascal," retorted the colonel, in furious tones.

"It is the truth, as you will soon know. And now I will have a few words with you only, as we are given more to silent acts."

"What have you to say to me, you infernal scoundrel?"

"Do you remember a scene that was displayed here some time ago, when you hung a young French officer on that tree yonder?"

"Of course I do, and I hope to hang you and the other rascals before very long."

The colonel then cast an anxious glance toward the garrison town as he continued in blustering tones, saying:

"I will soon have friends here who will put an end to your rascally work. I won't spare a single one of you."

"Hunt them down like wolves!" cried the old woman.

"Silence," thundered the speaker of the wolves. "Colonel Barclay, the young officer I allude to, as well as several others that you put to death, were all born soldiers of France. We are now taking our revenge on you for your cruel deeds."

"I defy you, you scoundrel. You may kill me, but you cannot cow me."

And the brutal man meant every word he uttered, as there was not a spark of cowardice in his heart.

The speaker of the Wolves then addressed the defiant man again, saying:

"Do you acknowledge that you put brave French soldiers to death?"

"I don't acknowledge anything of the kind, but I do assert that I punished a lot of infernal rebels who came over here to fight with the rascally French, and I would do the same over again to-morrow."

"Then I declare that you are guilty of a terrible punishment," continued the speaker of the Wolves, as he turned to his companions. "Do you say yes or no to my judgment, friends?"

The silent men raised their swords aloft on the instant, nodding their heads at the same time.

"You are declared guilty, and we will bear you away for punishment," cried the speaker of the band.

"Help, help, you cowardly wretches in there!" yelled the colonel, in his loudest tones. "Will you not strike one blow for your commanding officer?"

Another hideous laugh burst from the old hag, as she yelled out:

"Not a blow will they strike for you, Peter Barclay, and I tell you to go on now and hunt down the brave boys like wolves, if you can."

"Silence, old woman!" again thundered the speaker of the Wolves, as he bent his ominous glance on Paul Rodney and made a motion.

One of his companions at once drew the gag from the new recruit's mouth, and Paul cried:

"The mischief fire me if this isn't a nice way to treat one of your own friends, boys, after I doing just what you told me."

"Paul Rodney!" cried the speaker of the Wolves in furious tones, "you are a spy for that wretch beside you, and we know it. We will put him to death in another manner, but you will be hung from the tree on which one of his victims suffered."

Another motion was made by the speaker, and four of the silent men led the young man away toward the tree.

The old woman stared after him, wringing her hands, as she cried:

"Sure, that's Paul Rodney, the son of my friend Bridget, and I swear that he is a decent boy and one of the real kind."

"Silence, old woman!" again thundered the speaker of the Wolves, "as we are certain that he is a vile traitor and a spy on us."

Paul was led under the tree protesting his innocence in the loudest manner, and the old woman followed after him as she muttered to herself:

"I cut the other chap down, and I'll do the same for him, as I am certain that he is true to the boys, but maybe I won't have as good a chance, and I'll try another plan to help him."

The old woman then uttered another wild shriek and dashed in among the mounted Wolves to embrace the young prisoner as she cried:

"Poor Paul, have you a word at all to say to me to take to your poor mother?"

"Tell my mother that I died true to the cause," answered Paul, as the old woman embraced him.

The Wolves drew back a little, as if respecting the old creature, and she whispered into the young man's ear, saying:

"I am cutting the rope, and away into the grove behind you for dear life."

Paul felt his arms free the next moment, and the rope around his neck was severed almost at the same time.

Giving a yell of despair and desperation, the young man darted through the Wolves that guarded him and made into the grove, yelling aloud:

"I won't die the death of a stag until I prove that I am a true man."

The four wolves on horseback were riding after the fugitive when a signal from their leader called them back.

After consulting in whispers for a few seconds with those near him, the leader of the band cried out:

"To the stables for one of the best horses left, and then we will take him away to the mountain for punishment."

"Do your best, you scoundrels," cried the defiant magistrate, "but my brave followers will soon be on you and slay you with sword and halter."

The Silent Wolves did not notice the threat, and the horse was soon brought forth.

A dead silence still reigned around the mansion, as the noisy old woman had darted away after Paul Rodney.

As no attempt was made to gag the blustering colonel again, he kept yelling out to those inside to sally forth to his assistance, while he would also mutter to himself:

"If that rascal, Paul Rodney, is not in with the cut-throats here, he will soon bring the troopers from the garrison to my rescue."

When the colonel was mounted on his own horse, one of the silent men holding the end of the rope securing his arms, the leader gave one of his peculiar orders, and the troops started down the lawn again.

The colonel then gave one frantic yell, and cried out in his most desperate tones:

"If you cowards in, there will not come out to my rescue, report to my general that I will face death like a true soldier."

At that moment another frantic scream was heard in the hallway of the house, and then out on the lawn darted a young lady, crying:

"Oh, you wretches, do not take my uncle off to murder him."

The Silent Wolves had not yet started at full speed, and the young girl darted in among them and clasped her uncle by the leg, crying:

"They must not murder you, dear uncle, or they can kill me also."

The leader of the Wolves motioned to his men once more, and the band drew up on the lawn around the prisoner and his niece.

The leader then sprang from his horse and approached the young girl as he addressed her in respectful tones, saying:

"Young lady, we do not war on women, and your uncle deserves what he will get. Retire again and you are safe."

"I will not retire, you monster. If you slay my uncle you can kill me also. You horrid brutes, how did you set all the brave men in the house asleep?"

"Are my men all asleep, Olive?" inquired Colonel Barclay, in anxious tones.

"Yes, yes, sir, and I thought they were all dead as I passed them in the great hall."

"Then treachery has been at work, my dear, as the men must have been drugged."

"Will you not retire, young lady?" inquired the leader of the Wolves, in very gentle tones.

"I will not, you brute."

"Then you can come with us."

As the young leader spoke he raised the young girl in his arms and bore her to his horse.

Olive Barclay screamed with terror until the strange being whispered a few words in her ear, and then a suppressed cry of joy escaped from her lips.

The young leader sprang up on the saddle behind the girl, only to find an inanimate form clasped in his arms.

The Twenty Silent Wolves then formed around the prisoner, and away they rode toward the highway.

The young leader rode to the right of the front rank, clasping the insensible girl in his arms, as he muttered to himself:

"How could I dream that Olive would be here in Ireland, when I was certain that she was still at school in France?"

Just as the band reached the high road a loud blast from a bugle was heard, followed by the heavy tramping of many horses.

The leader turned in his saddle for a moment and waved his sword back in defiance.

He then held it in front of him, as if urging his followers forward at greater speed.

Onward at greater speed dashed the coal-black steeds, gliding over the road with noiseless tread, while on after them thundered fully a hundred troopers, led on by the brother of the young girl who rested on the breast of the strange young leader.

Colonel Barclay heard that bugle blast and the tramping of the heavy troops behind, and a joyous shout burst from him ere he cried:

"Now, you infamous rascals, you will feel the weight of good English steel. Do you hear our friends coming, dear Olive?"

The young girl did not answer, as she was whispering to the young Wolf at the time, and saying:

"Oh, dear Dion, is it possible that you are alive and here in Ireland in that awful band? Speak to me again, I pray you."

Pressing the girl closer to his breast, the young leader responded:

"I am alive and fighting with this horrid band, as you call them, dear Olive, and I am glad of a chance to tell you that I glory in the work I am engaged in!"

"You horrid wretch, how can you say so? You, a French officer, to glory in fighting with a band of savage bandits!"

"They are only so in appearance, dear Olive, as I can assure you that they are far nobler men than the English officers and soldiers I met here in Ireland."

"How can you say that to me?"

"It is the truth, as you would know if you had witnessed the scene that I have passed through."

"You wretch, I will never believe you. Yet I am delighted to know that you are alive, when I heard in Paris that you died here."

"I was reported dead, dear Olive, but I had a miraculous escape. Do you fear to ride up to our rendezvous with me?"

"Not if you are leader of this band, and I know that you will spare my uncle."

"We will speak of that hereafter, my adored one, and now keep silent, or we may be noticed."

"Then you do not wish me to openly recognize you, dear Dion?"

"Not for a thousand worlds. Be silent now, my dear one."

As the young man whispered the last words he pressed the young girl still closer to his breast, and made a motion to those behind him.

The blustering colonel was still raving in loud tones, and calling on those behind them to ride faster and faster to the rescue, when one of the Silent Wolves quietly slipped a gag on his mouth.

Then out through a silent village they rushed, and just as they turned up toward the mountain a small troop of horsemen appeared suddenly before the Silent Wolves.

The young man, clasping the girl in his arms, did not utter a single cry as he perceived his enemies, but he did make an onward move with his sword, and the silent cavalcade swept on all the faster.

The officer in command of the troopers ahead did not perceive the Silent Wolves until they rushed up close on them, and he could scarcely form his men in line before the grim figures on the coal-black steeds swept through their foes like a streak, cutting and slashing all before them.

A mortified groan burst from Colonel Barclay as he beheld the sudden defeat of the mounted men, who were fully equal to the Silent Wolves in number.

The young lady held her breath in terror and pressed closer to the young man as she heard the clashing of the steel blades, the shouts of the troopers and the groans of the wounded who fell on the road, while she gasped to herself:

"Mercy on me, this is terrible!"

During the short struggle not a single word escaped from any of the Silent Wolves, and not a groan could be heard from three of the brave fellows who had received saber cuts in that hand-to-hand struggle.

Then on up the mountainside swept the twenty riders and their prisoners.

On after them rode young Captain Barclay at the head of a hundred chosen troopers.

When the silent riders reached the top of the mountain bandages were placed over the eyes of Colonel Barclay and his niece, yet the cavalcade scarcely delayed a moment while the operation was being performed.

Then away across the mountain, at a faster pace than ever, swept the grim band, the young leader whispering to the girl before him, and saying:

"Welcome to my mountain retreat, dear Olive, and I could be happy with you there forever."

The young girl pressed the young man's arm as she responded, saying:

"You are a great fool, Dion, and you must fly out of Ireland at once."

"Not until my task is accomplished here, even though love should lead me."

"Then you will perish."

"It is not my fate to do so until I have avenged my dear friends. Let us not speak on that subject now, and be silent and cautious."

"You are a fool, Dion, but I will obey you."

Over the hilltop and through winding rocky paths rode the Silent Wolves, the grim colonel grinding his teeth, as he muttered to himself:

"I do not hear the tramping of the troopers behind us now, and I fear that the rebel dogs will escape us to-night again."

The rebel dogs did escape that night, as Captain Oscar Barclay and his troopers could not find a trace of them when they reached the top of the mountain.

Early on the following morning, when Paul Rodney crawled out of a small stable behind his mother's house, and peered around as if fearing friend and foe alike, he perceived a small strip of paper lying on the ground.

Picking it up with a start, he read it carefully, and then tore it into small pieces, rubbing his head, as he muttered aloud:

"May the mischief take me if I am not a fool for playing a double game, and I am afraid that I'll lose my head between them. However, I'll face the music boldly now, and do what I am told by the lad who writes himself the Silent One."

Paul Rodney then hastened to partake of his breakfast in the cottage, and he left his mother soon after, saying:

"I'll step into the town to hear the news, mother, and don't be troubled if you don't see me again before night."

The old woman wrung her hands and groaned forth:

"Oh, wirri, wirri, it is I am in dread, you foolish boy, that I'll never lay eyes on you again."

CHAPTER V.

DEATH TO THE SILENT WOLVES.

In the garrison town of Dranmore that day there was excitement enough for everyone.

When Paul Rodney reached Tom Foley's tavern he found it crowded with excited men, all of whom were discussing important events of the previous night.

The moment Paul entered the tap-room the landlord called him aside and whispered to him, saying:

"Someone wants to see you in the back room."

Paul entered the back room without the slightest hesitation, and he was a little surprised on perceiving the old woman who had rescued him on the previous night.

That old woman's name was Molly Malloy, and she was a well-known character in the neighborhood.

Winking at Paul and grinning at the same time, the old creature drew him to a seat beside her and whispered to him, saying:

"So you didn't tell anyone what happened you last night?"

"What a fool I am, Molly."

"You are not a fool, but you talk too much sometimes, and I want you to keep a silent tongue in your head hereafter."

"But won't it be known that I was there last night, Molly?"

"Not a bit of it, if you keep still, and not one in the house saw you barring the colonel himself, and he won't tell, I am sure."

"How in the mischief was it all worked, Molly?"

"How was what worked?"

"The taking of the mansion out there so quietly, and so many of the colonel's men in there?"

The old woman gave a sly wink at the young fellow, and evasively answered:

"The Silent Wolves have their friends where no one suspects, and they can put their enemies to sleep when it is necessary. Now I have a word for you."

"What is it, Molly?"

"Go about to-day as if nothing happened to you last night, and keep a sharp eye on that cousin of yours."

"But won't I see my friends of last night soon again, and sure they didn't mean to hang me up?"

The old woman grinned, and replied:

"There's no telling what they thought about you, but I was sent with word to you this morning that you will see them again to-night."

"Am I to do anything for them in the meantime?"

"You are. Manage to find out what they are doing at the barracks, but you must be cautious and not let them suspect you."

"What has become of Colonel Barclay, Molly?"

"That's no matter to you. Do as I tell you, and you will see the Silent One to-night again. Go out now and mind how you behave yourself."

Being thus admonished, Paul Rodney was about to leave the back room when the old woman called him back and whispered into his ear, saying:

"Don't be surprised at who you see out there, and treat him as if he was a stranger to you entirely."

"Who do you mean, Molly?"

"No matter who I mean, but you take my advice and act your part well."

Paul Rodney was a bright fellow, and he could play a part to perfection.

From the manner in which the Silent Wolves had treated him on the previous night he was very much puzzled to know whether they looked upon him as a friend or an enemy, but the words of the old woman assured him, and he felt more confidence in himself.

On entering the town the young fellow was also afraid that his friends there may have heard something about his adventures on the lawn on the previous night, and that he would be looked upon with dark suspicion.

On reflecting, however, he felt that the only witnesses against him were out of the way, as he was aware that Olive Barclay had been taken away to the mountain with her uncle.

On entering the tap-room again, Paul was somewhat surprised on perceiving the simple-looking young stranger of the previous night.

The rough-looking lad was standing near a group of the customers, with his mouth and eyes wide open as he listened to their conversation.

He did not pretend to perceive Paul Rodney at first, but when the latter drew near to join in the conversation, the simple lad remarked to him:

"Isn't it wonderful news entirely?"

"So it is," answered Paul, in very careless tones.

"To think of their whipping the colonel away like that," continued the simple lad. "What will they be trying to do next?"

"It is hard to tell," answered Paul, who said to himself:

"This is the cutest and the queerest chap I ever met in all my born days. I wonder if he wants to have a quiet talk with me now?"

As if in answer to the mental question, Paul caught a sly wink from the young stranger at the moment, and they stepped aside together.

"Did you see my grandmother in there?" inquired the disguised Wolf, in careless yet cautious tones.

"And who is your grandmother?" inquired Paul, speaking in subdued tones also.

"Old Molly Malloy, of course."

"And what's your name then, my boy?"

"Darby Malloy, and I come from over the mountain, as I said last night."

"Did you ever see a handsomer lady in your life?" cried a loud voice at the door, as an open carriage rolled along the road driving into the town.

In that carriage was seated a young lady, who called forth the remark from the man at the door.

The young lady referred to was very beautiful indeed, and she had a sad, pensive face that would attract the attention of any observer.

Several of the customers in the tavern crowded to the door and to the window to catch a glimpse of the beautiful creature, and among them were Paul Rodney and the young fellow calling himself Darby Malloy.

"She's a beauty, and no mistake," remarked Paul. "What ails you now, my boy?"

Darby Malloy had grasped Paul by the arm in a nervous manner, and he kept staring at the young lady until she passed out of sight into the town.

Paul stared at him for a moment, and he could perceive that the young stranger was fearfully agitated.

At that moment a strong body of troopers dashed along from the barracks, and as they passed the tavern they all brandished their sabers and sent forth a thrilling shout, crying:

"Death to the Silent Wolves!"

The clutch of the young stranger was still on Paul's arm as he drew the latter aside, and whispered to him in agitated tones, saying:

"You saw that young lady?"

"You may be sure I did, and I'll never forget her face as long as I live," answered Paul, fervently. "You must know her yourself?"

"Yes, yes. Will you do what I ask you now, as you are to be one of us?"

"To be sure I will, if you will only tell me that the hanging was all a joke last night."

"Of course it was, to deceive Colonel Barclay. Now you will obey me?"

"To the letter," answered Paul, as his heart sounded with joy.

"Then away with you, and tell me where that young lady stops and what she is here for. I will await you here until you return."

"Mind yourself or you will be noticed," cautioned Paul, as he cast a glance around and perceived the real spy entering the tavern at the moment.

"I am myself again," answered the young stranger, resuming the simple stare for the part he was acting.

Paul Rodney only waited to exchange a few careless words with the young man who pretended to be his cousin, and he then hastened into the town on his mission.

The pretended Darby Malloy was soon hobnobbing with old Molly in the back room, and she was saying to him:

"Do you trust the lad now?"

"Yes, I believe he will be true to death. How do I play my part?"

"It is wonderful how you do it, sir. Sure, if you were bred and born here on the soil you couldn't do it better, but you seemed a little fidgety awhile ago."

"That is all over now, Molly, and I have something for you to do."

"I am ready and willing, sir."

The young fellow then whispered earnestly into the old woman's ear for some time, while she kept nodding and muttering:

"It is wonderful entirely how things come about in this queer world."

Having concluded his instructions to old Molly, the young stranger went out in the tap-room again, and the old creature hastened into the town.

It was fully an hour before Paul Rodney returned to the tavern, and he at once drew the young stranger aside and whispered to him, saying:

"The young lady is stopping at the big hotel, and Captain Oscar Barclay is waiting on her."

The young stranger started a little, and a dark frown overspread his face; but he soon recovered himself and inquired:

"Do you know what she is here for?"

"She is looking for the body of her dead brother, who was a young French officer, and who was killed in a fight near here."

Another dark frown appeared on the young stranger's face as he inquired:

"Does she appear to be on friendly terms with Captain Barclay?"

"Very friendly, indeed. I understood that he is going to search high and low for the body just as soon as he rescues his uncle and his sister."

"Is she going to stop at the hotel?"

"It looks like it, sir, as she has engaged rooms there for a week."

"Don't address me with sir," remonstrated the young stranger. "Call me Darby, as if you knew me all your life. Now come with me."

"Very good, Darby."

The young men then sauntered through the town toward the hotel, the pretended Darby Malloy gaping around him with as simple an expression of countenance as if he had never looked into a store window before.

Just as they reached the hotel the young lady they were in quest of drove off in a carriage with Captain Oscar Barclay, who was a dashing, handsome young officer of twenty-five.

"Find where they are going," whispered the young stranger to his companion.

"Very good."

Paul went into the hotel and returned in about five minutes after saying to his companion:

"They are going out to the colonel's mansion, and the young lady is going to stop there for the present."

Another dark frown appeared on the young stranger's face,

a muttered imprecation escaped from his lips, and he clenched his hands nervously as he said to Paul:

"We must go out after them."

"As you say, Darby," answered Paul, with a knowing wink.

The two young men hastened out to the mansion, the stranger giving Paul some earnest instructions on the way.

When they reached the grounds outside the mansion they found that the place was guarded by a large body of troopers, and that no stranger would be admitted.

"I must get a message to that young lady at once," said the young stranger to Paul.

"I'll do it for you if mortal man can do it," was Paul's brave answer. "I'll go up at once and ask to see Captain Barclay himself. Will you give me a line or word of mouth?"

The young stranger meditated a few moments, and then replied, saying:

"We must wait until night, as my anxiety may ruin all. I must control myself, as I have more than myself to think of now."

"Just as you say, Darby," answered Paul, as they turned toward the town again.

As they passed the barracks another strong party of troopers rode out, and again that thrilling cry was heard:

"Death to the Silent Wolves!"

When the young stranger reached the tavern again, old Molly was waiting for him in the back room, and she whispered earnestly to him for some moments.

Fearful was the frown on the young fellow's face as he listened, and he then hissed forth:

"And so that is the compact, Molly. If he finds the body of her brother she promises to be his wife."

"The girl in the hotel heard every word they said, sir, and that is the bargain between them."

Old Molly nodded and replied:

"Then I must away, Molly, and I can just whisper to you that the Silent Wolves will have work again to-night."

The young man then gave some instructions to the old woman, and to Paul Rodney, when he hastened away from the tavern, grinding his teeth as he muttered to himself:

"The perfidious wretch deems that he has won the prize, but I will baffle him before long."

As the young stranger made his way out of the town again and turned into a lonely path leading up toward the mountain, Captain Oscar Barclay dashed along the highway at the head of the largest body of troopers out on the hunt yet, and still their cry was:

"Death to the Silent Wolves!"

The mountain was fairly swarming with troopers as the young stranger strolled up that way, but he did not appear to heed them, as he kept muttering to himself:

"Old Molly is right, and this is a queer world we live in now."

About nine o'clock that night Paul Rodney gained admittance to the mansion by stating to the guards outside that he had an important message for Captain Oscar Barclay.

The young fellow was ushered into the hallway, and the gallant captain soon came out to see him, saying:

"Well, sirrah, do you bring a message to me?"

"I do, captain, and it is from the colonel himself."

"Where is he, and have you seen him?"

"He is up on the mountain, sir, but I did not see him."

At that moment a horseman rode up to the front door at full speed, and then into the hallway burst the brutal colonel himself, crying:

"Where is this rascal?"

His eyes then fell on Paul Rodney, and he sprang forward

with a cry of rage to deal him a blow in the face, as he yelled:

"You infernal, treacherous hound, it was you who betrayed me last night!"

Paul staggered back as he cried:

"You are wrong, colonel."

"Seize him, seize him," yelled the colonel, as he darted at Paul again, "and hang him at once. Out to the tree with him!"

Paul made a dart for the stairs, but Captain Barclay struck him on the head with the flat end of his sword and felled him on the floor.

Before the young fellow could recover his feet again, three troopers had seized him, while the brutal colonel kept yelling:

"Out to the tree with him, and I will see that he is not cut down. Death to the Silent Wolves is the cry to-night."

CHAPTER VI.

DARBY MALLOY AT WORK.

When Paul Rodney was pounced on in the hallway and dragged forth for execution, a young lady stood at the parlor door and stared at the young fellow with pitying eyes, as she gasped forth:

"Mercy on me, is this the way they serve out justice in Ireland?"

Colonel Barclay hastened out after his victim without noticing the young lady, but his gallant nephew approached her with a smile, saying:

"I regret that you witness such a scene, dear Marguerite, and——"

"But they will not put the unfortunate young man to death without a trial?" interrupted the young girl, in excited tones.

The young officer pushed her gently back into the parlor, as he replied:

"My uncle asserts that he is a treacherous spy, and the fellow must suffer."

"I fear that your uncle is a brute. Do go out, Captain Barclay, and plead for the young man."

The captain shook his head and replied, saying:

"It would be useless, my dear young lady, as my uncle never relents."

"Has he the power to put a human being to death without trial, then?"

"He has. Martial law is enforced here at present, and as my uncle is a magistrate he has full power to pass sentence in such cases. But do not trouble yourself about the miserable wretch, as he is only a very common fellow."

"He is a human being," answered the young girl, in still more indignant tones, "and I noticed that he had a good face and a splendid form. Oh, do hasten out and plead for him."

"It would be useless, dear lady."

"Then I will out myself and plead with your uncle. Will you not escort me?"

As the young lady spoke she moved out into the hallway with hasty strides, and the gallant captain followed her, exclaiming:

"It will be useless, my dear young lady, as my uncle would not relent if an angel from heaven pleaded with him in such a case."

"I am not an angel from Heaven, but I will plead with him. Come and introduce me to your uncle, and assist me if you ever hope for me to smile on you again."

The young lady darted out of the open doorway without waiting for a response, and the gallant captain was compelled to follow her.

Poor Paul Rodney was standing under the tree at the moment with the rope around his neck, and two troopers stood near him ready to swing him up when ordered.

Eight or ten other armed men stood around as if to prevent the prisoner from escaping.

Colonel Barclay strode up to the prisoner and shook his fist in his face, as he cried in savage tones:

"Confess now, you infernal rascal, that you are in league with those rascally rebels who are known as the Silent Wolves."

Paul Rodney smiled at the enraged officer, and then answered in bold tones:

"I am not engaged with the Silent Wolves, colonel, but I will tell you right here that I hope to be, before very long, either."

"You audacious scoundrel, how dare you say that to me, when you are in my employ?"

A merry laugh burst from the prisoner, and he replied:

"I was employed in my country's cause before I ever spoke to you, you old tyrant, and I was only humbugging you when I pretended to be hunting down the brave men who defy your whole army."

"Up with him, then, and see that you make a good job of it."

"Colonel Barclay, allow me to introduce you to Miss St. Mars, a young French lady whom you have heard me speak about," said Captain Barclay.

The brutal colonel turned abruptly and bowed to the young lady, saying:

"Excuse me, young lady, but this is not a scene for your eyes."

The two troopers had hesitated to pull Paul Rodney up in the presence of the young lady, who addressed the colonel in earnest tones, saying:

"Pardon me, colonel, but I beg you will not put that young man to death without giving him time to repent of his sins at least."

"I beg you will go to the house, young lady, as I cannot permit anyone to interfere with my acts of justice."

"I thank you from my inmost heart, young lady," cried Paul Rodney, "but you might as well be talking to a stone as trying to keep that old tyrant from taking the lives of human beings."

"Silence, you rascal!" thundered the colonel. "Young lady, I beg that you will retire, as this is not a fit scene for you."

"I will not retire, sir, and I protest, in the name of humanity, against such an outrage. You have not given that young man even the form of a trial."

"He never does, young lady," cried the prisoner. "Sure, he hung up a brave young French officer on this very tree when he knew in his heart that he was a Frenchman born at the time."

"That's an infernal lie, you scoundrel!" roared the colonel.

"It is not an infernal lie!" cried a deep-toned voice that appeared to come from the clouds.

The young lady screamed, and then gasped forth:

"Mercy on me, that is the voice of my dead brother Dion."

"Yes, yes, Marguerite," cried the deep-toned voice again, "it is the voice of your dead brother, and he now tells you from the grave that he died on that fatal tree by the order of the wretch who stands before you."

Colonel Barclay staggered back on hearing the accusation,

and then glared around as he gasped forth: "What trick is this?"

"It is no trick, you inhuman brute," answered the voice, "as you are listening to the voice of the dead now. Oh, Marguerite, Marguerite, beware of the wretches who are near you now. Colonel Barclay murdered your brother in cold blood, and his nephew, Captain Oscar Barclay, looked out of the window while I was stating my name and rank, and he did not raise his voice to save me."

The young officer staggered back also as he gasped forth:

"You cannot believe that, Marguerite."

The voice was then heard again crying:

"She must believe it, as she knows that her brother never lied in life, and he will not speak from the grave to utter a falsehood. Dare the wretches deny that I was put to death on that tree as an Irish rebel, when I had state my name and rank to them?"

Colonel Barclay was not a superstitious man, and while he was a little dumfounded at first when he heard the solemn voice, he soon recovered his presence of mind and then cried:

"This is some infamous trick, and I will soon expose it. Retire, young lady, as I assure you that you are the victim of a——"

"I am not, and I cannot be mistaken in my dear brother's voice," interrupted the young lady, in agitated tones. "Oh, Dion, Dion, give me some word or incident in our early life that will tell me that it is not a stranger who is thus playing on my imagination."

"I will, I will, dear sister. Do you not remember that day outside Marseilles when I rescued you from the huge mastiff, the marks of whose teeth were on my arm until I perished on that fatal tree?"

"Yes, yes!" gasped the young lady.

"Do you not remember that I warned you against having anything to do with Oscar Barclay?"

"Yes, yes, Dion."

"Then I now warn you to beware of him, and remember that he and his uncle are my murderers. I will tell you when my body is lying."

"Where, Dion, where?"

"You must pledge me that you will go in search of it alone."

"I will, I will," gasped the young lady.

"Then you will find it on the top of the mountain in a direct line from here. The spot is marked by a bare brown rock, on which you will find my name cut."

The colonel was staring around him and up into the tree while the dialogue was going on, and he then cried in furious tones, pointing upward:

"Fire up in that tree with your pistols, men!"

The troopers drew their large pistols and aimed upward as the colonel continued:

"We'll soon have the rascal down!"

"Fool! fool!" yelled the deep-toned voice. "Can you not believe that you hear the dead?"

"Fire!" cried the colonel.

A sharp volley rang out, and a terrified scream burst from the young lady.

"Fire again," cried the young lady.

The troopers did fire again, while all eyes were fixed upon the tree.

The smoke from the large pistols became quite dense around the prisoner, and his form was shrouded for the time.

Then out rang the deep-toned voice again, crying:

"Fools—fools! Do you not know that you cannot injure the dead?"

The young lady then grasped Colonel Barclay by the arm, crying:

"Sir, I swear to you that it is my brother Dion whose voice I heard. Is it true that you put a young French officer to death on that tree?"

"It is not true, young lady."

"It is true, you infamous liar!" rang out the voice again, "and your crime was witnessed by an old woman who lives in the town and who is known as Molly Malloy."

"Curses on the old hag!" cried the colonel, as he broke away from the young lady. "What has become of the prisoner, you rascals?"

A cry of astonishment burst from the troopers as the smoke cleared away from under the tree, for Paul Rodney was no longer standing there.

The night was dark and gloomy, and the dense smoke around him gave the brave fellow a splendid chance of escaping.

While they were all gazing up at the tree an old woman darted out from the grove and cut the rope above his head as she whispered to him:

"Back with you for your life now."

Paul Rodney did dart back into the grove with the speed of a deer, while he chuckled to himself, saying:

"It is my friend Darby Malloy who is playing the trick on them, and I think I know who he is now. May Heaven bless that sweet young lady the longest day she lives, and I will be her slave until I die."

The enraged colonel was more furious than ever when he discovered that the prisoner had escaped, and he cursed and swore at the troopers in a terrible manner, while he continued, saying:

"Out with the guards and search the neighborhood. If you see the fellow, shoot him down on the instant, without any mercy."

"I beg you will retire with me, young lady," said Captain Barclay, as the troopers dashed to and fro in great confusion.

"I will retire to the hotel at once, sir," was the indignant reply from the young lady as she returned toward the house."

The gallant captain followed her, saying:

"I can assure you that some infamous trick has been played on you."

"Impossible, sir!"

"But what if we could catch the scoundrel who has been thus playing on your feelings?"

"You cannot catch the dead, and that was my dear brother's voice I heard. I will ride up to the mountain to see his grave this very night."

"That is out of the question, Marguerite, as you would be only taken by the vile rebels."

"The vile rebels will not injure the sister of one who died in their behalf. I insist on returning to town at once, where I will secure a guide and horse to take us up to my brother's grave."

"If you insist on going, my dear young lady, I will accompany you."

They had reached the door at the moment, and the young French lady turned on her admirer as she demanded in sarcastic tones:

"Are you not afraid to venture up on the lonely mountain with me?"

"I assure you that I am not."

"Did you not hear my brother say that I must ride to his grave alone?"

The captain frowned and shook his head, as he replied in impatient tones:

"Young lady, I beg that you will not be so ridiculous as to pay any attention to that voice. I assure you, on my word of honor, that it is but the trick of some rascal who may have known your brother here, and who has learned to imitate his voice."

"Then how could that rascal know about the incident mentioned by my brother?"

"He may have known your brother here in Ireland, or he may be some old friend of his from France, and hiding here at present."

The young lady shook her head in the most positive manner as she answered, saying:

"I will ride up to the mountain to-night at all hazards, and see if the rock is there that my brother mentioned. The moon will be up in a few hours, and I will find a guide in the town."

"Nonsense, nonsense," cried Colonel Barclay, as he entered the hallway after them.

"It is not nonsense, sir, and I insist on going to seek my brother's grave."

"And I insist that you will not do anything of the kind, young lady," replied the colonel in severe tones, as he caught some warning glances given him by his designing young nephew.

The young Frenchwoman stared from the uncle to the nephew, and she at once realized that she was in the hands of two very unscrupulous men.

Summoning all her courage, however, she addressed the young man, saying:

"Captain Barclay, I came here as your guest to-night, and I demand that you send me back to the hotel as soon as possible."

The colonel then advanced and bent a stern glance on the young woman as he said:

"You cannot leave this house to-night, young lady."

"Why not, sir?"

"Because I will detain you as a suspicious person."

"Do you mean to insult me, sir?"

"Not at all, but I must do my duty. You have just come from France, which country is at war with England at present, and I will detain you as a prisoner until I am convinced that you are not a spy."

The young lady started back and glared at the uncle and his nephew again, her eyes flashing with indignation as she exclaimed:

"You infamous wretches. Is this the manner in which you treat a lady who has come here to look for the body of her dear brother?"

"Another grim smile appeared on the face of the magistrate as he replied, saying:

"Young lady, I must do my duty. We will treat you with all courtesy, but I must say that you are a prisoner at present."

"Wretches, wretches! I can now perceive that my dear brother spoke the truth. I do believe that you murdered him, and I call on the spirit of the dead to rescue me from such vile beings."

"Your prayer will be heard, dear sister," cried the deep-toned voice again. "Fear not, as I will watch over you and guard you from the wretch who enticed you here for his own villainous ends."

"Heaven be praised," gasped the young lady, as she sank on her knees and clasped her hands. "Now I know why I was invited to this wretched country."

Colonel Barclay and his nephew sprang to the doorway on hearing the voice, the former crying:

"This is intolerable! Some of those rascally Silent Wolves are playing tricks on us again, and we must find them out."

"Yes, yes," cried the voice of the dead. "The rascally Silent Wolves are playing tricks on you again, but you will never find them out until the hour of your death."

CHAPTER VII.

OLD MOLLY IN TROUBLE.

The young Frenchwoman was still kneeling as if in prayer, when Colonel Barclay and his nephew entered the hallway again.

They were followed by two troopers, who were dragging old Molly Malloy in between them.

The young lady sprang to her feet and drew back, saying: "Then I suppose I am a prisoner here?"

"For the present, young lady," answered the colonel in haughty tones.

The old woman stared at the young lady for a moment, and a smile appeared on her withered countenance as she exclaimed:

"It is the beautiful lady I saw riding through the town to-day."

"Silence, you old wretch," cried Colonel Barclay, "and I request you to retire to the parlor, young lady."

"Don't go yet awhile, my pretty darling," cried the old prisoner, "as I have something to say to you."

"Retire, I insist on it, young lady," cried Colonel Barclay.

"I want to tell you," cried the old woman, "that you have friends on the hills who will soon take you out of the clutches of the vampires here."

"Thank you, old lady," replied the young Frenchwoman, as Colonel Barclay almost forced her into the parlor.

"Drag that old wretch into the justice-room," cried the magistrate, "and I will soon deal with her as she deserves."

"To the mischief I pitch you and all you can do, you old tyrant," cried Molly, as they dragged her into a large room at the back of the hallway.

The magistrate seated himself in his chair of office, and glared at the old prisoner as he commenced, saying:

"Now, Molly Malloy, do you know that you deserve a terrible punishment?"

"What for?"

"For taking part with the infernal Silent Wolves last night."

"What part did I take with them?"

"You aided them in making me a prisoner."

"That's a big lie for you, as you were a prisoner before I saw you."

The magistrate fumed for a moment or so, and then cast a grim smile at the bold old creature, as he said:

"I will put you to death for conspiring against the crown."

The old woman snapped her fingers at the stern man, as she cried:

"That much for you and the crown, and I wish I could send you all to the bottom of the sea. I want to tell you one thing."

"What is that, you old wretch?"

"You haven't the courage to put me to death."

"Why haven't I?"

"Because if you did you would never find the son you lost long ago."

The magistrate sprang from his chair and glared at the old

woman in the most anxious manner, as he demanded in gentler tones:

"Do you know where my son is?"

"That I do."

"Where is he then?"

"He is where you will not find him until the proper time comes."

The magistrate glared savagely at the old creature, and then cried:

"You infernal old wretch, you are only trying to humbug me with that story."

"I am not trying to humbug you, as I can prove that your son is living, and I know where he is at this very moment."

"Where is he then?"

"Didn't I tell you I wouldn't tell you until the proper time came. Put me to death if you like, and then you will never know him."

"What proof have you of what you speak?"

"The best of proof."

"Let me hear it."

"Give me your ear a moment then."

The magistrate signaled to the troopers to release the old woman, and she advanced and whispered earnestly into his ear for some moments.

The stern man listened with the deepest attention until the old woman concluded.

He then grasped her withered hands within his own, and pressed them in the most fervent manner, as he cried:

"Molly Malloy, I will do anything in this world for you if you will tell me where my boy is."

A proud smile appeared on the face of the old creature as she replied:

"If you gave me all the world I wouldn't tell you until the proper time comes."

"But you will tell me what he is like?"

"I will tell you that he is not a bit like his father, and that he will make ten times a better man."

The magistrate pushed the old woman rudely away as he hissed forth:

"You will drive me out of patience, and I will be tempted to strike you dead."

The old woman folded her arms, and stared defiantly at the tyrant as she cried:

"Do it and welcome, and then you will never know about your son."

The magistrate flung himself on his chair again, and covered his face with his hands as he cried:

"Take the old wretch away and put her in the strong room for the present."

The troopers seized the old woman again as she cried:

"If you don't let me walk out of here on my own business I swear to you that you will never see your son in this life again."

The magistrate stared up at the old woman for a moment, and then cried:

"Let her go her way, as she cannot do any mischief to me now."

"I won't go until I have a talk with the young French lady in there," cried Molly.

"You must go, and you cannot speak to the French lady, you old wretch."

"But I say I will, or I swear to you that you won't see your son again."

The magistrate sprang to his feet and glared fiercely at the old creature, crying:

"You old wretch, you will drive me mad yet. Have your own way."

"Then I can see the young lady."

"Yes, yes. You will find her in the parlor."

The old creature grinned and bowed before she left the room, saying in sarcastic tones:

"Much obliged to your honor, and sure it is you were always kind to the poor."

The old woman then strode toward the front parlor, muttering:

"I thought that would bring him to his senses, and won't I make him raving mad entirely when I point out his son to him."

Captain Barclay was striving to explain certain matters to the young lady at the time, saying:

"I assure you, my dear young lady, that my uncle is a very peculiar person, and it would not do for me to meddle with him."

"But this outrage," protested the young lady. "To think that I am held as a spy when you invited me here to Ireland to find my brother's body."

"When he is calmer I will explain to him, and he will apologize to you for his rudeness."

At that moment the old woman burst into the room, crying:

"My sweet young lady, Colonel Barclay says that I am to have a few words in private with you."

"Get out of here, Molly," cried the gallant captain, with a dark frown.

"Get out yourself, you impudent puppy," retorted the old woman, as she advanced to the young lady.

"Yes, get out of here, Oscar," cried the magistrate, from the door.

As his uncle did not speak in very pleasant tones, and well knowing his temper, the young man retired on the instant, saying:

"I will see you again, young lady."

Oscar Barclay was a very poor man, having only his pay as an officer to depend on, and he was obliged to his uncle for all the luxuries of life.

As he fully expected to be his uncle's heir, he acted like a mere slave in the presence of that cranky relative.

The old woman closed the door of the parlor, and then drew the young lady into a corner as she said in very subdued tones:

"My dear young lady, I knew your brave brother, and he was kind to me."

"My brother was kind to everyone, good woman," answered the young girl in kindly tones.

"I know that, my darling, and I will stand to you for his sake. You must leave here as soon as you can, for you have wicked men to deal with."

"I feel it, but how can I go when they keep me here a prisoner?"

"They won't do that long, I assure you. Your good brother has friends here who will soon come and take you from the rascals if you will do as I tell you."

"I will do anything you say, as I am sure that you are a true friend."

"I am that, my darling, and now let me whisper a few words into your ear."

The old woman had scarcely bent her mouth to the young lady's ear when a loud commotion was heard in the hallway.

Then the colonel's voice was heard crying:

"Who is this rascal?"

Another voice answered, saying:

"We caught the fellow prowling out around the trees, colonel, and we brought him in."

A third voice was then raised, crying:

"Sure, and I wasn't doing any harm at all, as I am a decent boy, and me name is Darby Malloy."

Old Molly started on hearing the voice, and she then gasped forth:

"Goodness gracious, have they caught him?"

"Who is it?" inquired the young lady.

"Me poor grandson who followed me here, and now he is in trouble, I fear."

The old woman then darted to the door and opened it, crying:

"Darby, Darby, ye villain of the world, didn't I tell you to wait for me down on the road?"

"To be sure, granny," answered the simple-looking lad, "but I thought you would never come back, ye were so long, and I came up here to look for you."

"Who is this young fellow, Molly?" demanded the colonel.

"My grandson, of course."

"What's his name?"

"Darby Malloy."

"What was he doing skulking around here?"

"Didn't he tell you that he came up here after me?"

"But he has no business skulking around here," growled the magistrate, "and I will punish him. Take him out, and give him a dozen good lashes, sergeant."

Molly sprang at once, and put her hands around the young fellow's neck as she cried:

"Don't you dare to put a rough hand on my darling boy, or I'll——"

Before Molly could say any more a wild shout arose outside, and then a trooper appeared at the doorway, crying:

"The Silent Wolves are out again, colonel, and they are riding down the road now."

"To horse—to horse!" cried the colonel as he sprang to the door. "Out with the whole force, and we will cut the rascals to pieces this time!"

While the colonel was giving the orders Darby burst away from the troopers, flinging them aside with great force.

He then darted out of the door and across the lawn as he yelled aloud:

"Ye villains of the world, you will never put a whip on me!"

The troopers were so much excited over the announcement and the preparations for a struggle with the Silent Wolves that the simple-looking lad was allowed to dash away.

Old Molly retreated into the parlor with a happy smile on her withered face as she muttered to herself, saying:

"He's a holy wonder, and there's not another like him in this wide world to-day. It would be queer if the Wolves were at work without him at their right hand in the fight or the ride."

Outside in the stables and on the lawns the utmost confusion prevailed, while the colonel kept crying:

"To horse, to horse! Mount and down to crush the Silent Wolves to death!"

"You'll soon have your chance now, me darling," said the old woman to the young lady.

"How is that, my friend?"

"Because your friends are coming to help you—the friends of your brave brother."

"To horse, to horse!" rang out again in the colonel's loudest tones.

Another messenger ran up to him at the moment, crying:

"The Silent Wolves are down at the gate now, colonel, and they are drawn up there."

"How many of them are there?"

"About twenty, sir."

"Fall in, then, and we will down on them."

In less than two minutes the fifty stout troopers were charging down toward the gate, their colonel shouting:

"Death to the Silent Wolves!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A DARING MANEUVER.

Drawn up on the broad road in front of the park wall were the twenty Silent Wolves, when the troopers charged down the lawn at them.

About fifty yards on the other side of the road ran a deep, narrow stream, which was the terror of fox hunters in the neighborhood.

The banks of the stream were very high above the rushing water below, and only the most daring riders ever thought of facing their horses across it even in the wild excitement of the chase.

Several of those daring riders, from time to time, had received severe shocks in attempting to leap their horses from bank to bank, and scarcely a dozen could boast of achieving the feat during the life-time of the oldest hunter in the country.

The nearest bridge crossing the stream was at the end of the town, and it was nearly a mile away from Colonel Barclay's mansion.

The moon was coming out from behind the clouds as the enraged colonel dashed down the long lawn to charge on the Silent Wolves.

The wolfish horsemen were drawn up on the road as if determined to await the charge of their numerous foes, and the troopers closed in battle array as they neared the open gate leading out on the thoroughfare.

Colonel Barclay still led his men, crying:

"Death to the Silent Wolves! Cut the infernal rebels to pieces!"

Silent and grim and stern, the Wolves appeared to await the charge until the troopers were almost within pistol-shot of them.

Their chief then raised his sword suddenly and made a motion toward the stream, when the twenty horsemen wheeled about in perfect order and dashed over the low stone wall into a meadow.

"We have the rascals now!" cried Colonel Barclay. "Charge at them, my men, and don't spare one of the rascals!"

A wild yell burst from the troopers, and then, as if with one voice, they cried:

"Death to the Silent Wolves!"

The grim horsemen rode on through the meadow toward the deep stream, and the troopers in the front then noticed that they were spreading out into one column.

Fearing some trap, Colonel Barclay cried a halt in loud tones.

The leader of the Wolves, who were still on the right of his line, turned at the moment in his saddle and waved his sword defiantly back at the troopers.

A yell of rage burst from Colonel Barclay's men on perceiving the defiant action, and the officer himself cried in furious tones:

"Fire on the rascals and then charge. Shoot them down, cut them down, and don't show the villains the least quarter!"

Out rang a volley from the pistols of the troopers, and the smoke was not yet cleared away when the fifty horsemen were galloping up to the stream.

Right at that stream rode the twenty wolves in one line, their leader waving his sword in defiance.

Colonel Barclay rode ahead of his men, and he was out of the smoke before them.

A cry of surprise then burst from the old veteran as he beheld the twenty horsemen clearing the stream in the most gallant manner, and he yelled aloud:

"Halt! The infernal rascals must be mounted on demon steeds, and did anyone ever see anything like that in all their born days?"

The troopers drew up within twenty yards of the deep stream, and more than one among them said to himself:

"It is useless to fight against them, as they cannot be human beings at all."

After halting his men, Colonel Barclay rode forward to the bank of the stream and stared across it as he growled forth:

"The infernal scoundrels have stolen the best horses in the country, and yet I did not imagine that there were twenty animals in the country able to cross that jump in such a manner."

When the Silent Wolves crossed the stream they rode on over the meadow for about thirty yards.

At another motion from their leader the grim horsemen wheeled around again and faced their foes.

The young leader then rode forward some paces, shaking his weapon in the most defiant manner, yet not a single word did he utter.

The enraged colonel glared at him for some moments, and he then drew a pistol as he cried:

"You infernal scoundrel; I'll have one shot at you, anyhow."

The enraged man then discharged his weapon, but the Silent Wolf was not injured.

Shaking his sword again in defiance, the young leader rode along in front of his troop and back again, and all the Wolves raised their swords and shook them in defiance, as if they meant to say:

"Follow us if you dare. Are there not twenty of you bold enough to cross that stream and give us battle on even terms?"

The enraged colonel appeared to understand the challenge, as he rode back to his men and yelled out in furious tones:

"My brave fellows, you are all well mounted, and will not twenty of you follow me across that stream to charge on the rascals?"

"We will all follow you, colonel!" cried an old sergeant, who had a splendid horse under him.

An approving shout burst from the men, and then the cry rang out once more:

"Death to the Silent Wolves!"

Colonel Barclay was a cautious man even in his rage, and he knew full well that it would be disastrous to attempt the crossing of the stream with the horses under the troopers.

Some of the best hunters in the country had come to grief in attempting the leap, and he felt certain that not more than ten out of his fifty men could succeed in reaching the grim enemies who awaited him on the other side.

Calling to the old sergeant, he said to him:

"Pick out twenty of your best horses as quick as possible and form them in line. Send three of your men to the barracks, and let another troop cross the bridge and charge the rascals on the other side."

The old sergeant selected three men, and away they rode toward the town.

He then made all haste to pick out twenty of the best horses in the troop, and the line was formed as soon as possible.

Colonel Barclay then rode out in front of the chosen men, crying:

"My brave fellows, will you try a dash across that stream with me to charge those infernal thieves who await us there?"

Every man of the twenty cried out in response:

"We will follow you, colonel."

The stern old warrior was mounted on the best hunter left in the stables after the raid, and he was a daring man in the hunt or on the battlefield.

Spurring the good animal forward, the grim old veteran raised him at the proper time, and over the frightful leap they went in gallant style.

Then on after him dashed the twenty troopers, while their comrades behind them shouted in encouragement.

The twenty horses rose as one, but only fifteen of them struck the bank on the other side with their forefeet, five of the animals refusing the fatal leap.

A wild yell of rage burst from the troopers in reserve as they sprang from their steeds to assist their unfortunate fellows who were floundering in the stream below.

Then yells of despair and rage were mingled with the shrilly neighs of the struggling animals in the water as they were swept down the stream.

The wildest confusion and excitement prevailed on the right bank, as the troopers ran along, making frantic efforts to drag their comrades from the water below.

Many of the unfortunate fellows who attempted that fearful leap were crushed beneath their horses as the animals fell back into the stream, while others received crushing wounds that rendered them helpless.

Colonel Barclay stared down at the struggling mass for a few moments in a terrible state of anguish, and he then turned his horse and charged at the Silent Wolves.

It seemed as if the enraged man was about to dash at his twenty grim foes in desperation, but he soon wheeled his horse again and faced the stream once more as he yelled aloud:

"You infernal hounds, you will not get me in your clutches again if I died for it."

Plunging his spurs into the animal's sides, the daring man raised him again at the proper time, and over they went in gallant style.

A shout of applause burst from the excited troopers as they beheld the feat, as they feared that their gallant colonel would meet the fate of the unfortunate fellows in the stream.

"Save all you can," yelled Colonel Barclay, as he sprang from his horse and ran down the bank of the stream to assist in rescuing his men.

The excitement became so intense that little or no thought was given to the Silent Wolves.

The troopers did not hear the almost silent tramping of the twenty horses under the daring men as they rode back toward the stream again.

They did not for a moment imagine that even the Silent Wolves would charge back on them.

On toward the stream the silent men rushed in open line, the brave leader still on the right and nearest to the busy troopers.

One wave of his sword and up to the bank they rushed, the twenty horses riding together as if impelled by one common impulse.

Then a yell of dismay burst from the busy troopers as the twenty Wolves burst in among them, cutting and slashing without mercy, and hurling them into the stream after their comrades.

Colonel Barclay was dashed to the ground while in the act of mounting his horse to rally his troopers, and he lay there as if dead.

Not a pistol shot was fired on either side in that brief but

desperate struggle, which scarcely lasted two minutes before the work of the Silent Wolves was over for the time.

In less than five minutes after the Silent Wolves leaped over the chasm to charge their scattered foes, the young leader was facing up toward the mansion at the head of his band, and all the troopers in and around the stream were either drowned, slain, or severely wounded.

In the meantime, another exciting scene was being enacted up at the mansion.

Captain Oscar Barclay was about to ride away to the charge with his uncle, when the latter drew him aside, saying:

"Those treacherous hounds below are up to some mischief. You remain behind and guard the house with the male servants and about five or six men I will leave you."

The young officer was only too glad of the chance thus presented, not that he feared to play his part in the expected struggle with the Silent Wolves, but he was fearful that the beautiful young French lady might escape during his absence.

Hastening into the house and calling on those left to guard the place with him, Oscar Barclay found old Molly in the act of leading the young French lady out of the parlor.

"Where are you going?" he demanded, addressing the old woman.

"I am going to show this young lady up to her bedroom, of course," was the prompt reply.

"The women of the house will attend to that, and you clear out of here as soon as possible. Young lady, retire to the parlor again."

Two of the troopers seized old Molly, as if to hurl her out of the front door, while she cried:

"Hands off, you villains, or it will be the worse for you, I can tell you."

Oscar Barclay led the young lady back into the parlor, as he cried to the troopers:

"Lead the old hag down to the road, and leave her there."

The young officer then closed the parlor door and turned to the young lady, saying:

"Dear Marguerite, I will now endeavor to explain matters to you."

The young lady drew back as she responded, saying:

"I do not need any explanation, sir. The mere fact of my being detained here as a prisoner is sufficient for me."

"But, my dear young lady, you must not blame me for the mad act of my stupid uncle. I am now ready to lead you to the town, even though I will have to face his anger thereafter."

The young lady appeared to jump at the offer, as she moved toward the young man, eagerly crying:

"Will you, indeed, take me back to the hotel?"

"Just as soon as I can order out the carriage. Remain here, and I will return to you in a few moments, even though my act may cause my uncle to disinherit me."

Old Molly had managed to get away from the troopers again, and she then appeared at the parlor door, crying:

"Do not go with the young rascal, young lady, as he is only leading you into a trap."

Captain Barclay cast a fearful scowl at the old woman, and attempted to push her out of the parlor, as he cried in frantic tones:

"Will no one get rid of this old wretch for me?"

The old woman darted to the side of the young lady, saying:

"You can't take me away from the young lady, and her friends will soon be here to save her."

A trooper appeared at the door at the moment, and the captain cried to him:

"Seize that old hag and put her in the strong room at once."

Instead of moving toward the old woman, the man made a bound at Captain Barclay, and seized him by the throat, as he hissed forth:

"It is you will feel the weight of my hand."

The gallant young officer was taken so much by surprise at the unexpected assault that he was flung on the floor by his assailant, receiving a stunning blow at the same time, before he could offer the least resistance.

Old Molly sprang to the assistance of the pretended trooper, saying:

"That's the way to serve the rascal who would whip the young lady away on the sly, if he had the chance. Don't let him open his lips until we have him bound and gagged."

The young lady stared in astonishment at the strange scene, and then gasped forth:

"Mercy on me, who are you?"

"I am the lad you interceded for out under the trees, miss, and I am here now to save you from the villain, according to the order of one who will soon come to help you himself."

"Who is that person, sir?"

"That's more than I could tell you, young lady, but I think he will be soon here to answer for himself?"

When they had bound and gagged the gallant captain, Paul Rodney and old Molly drew him into a large closet, the latter saying:

"Well done, Paul."

The young man bowed to the young lady and then turned to the door as he said to her:

"It will be best to remain here until your friends come for you, young lady. I will keep guard here at the door and no one will come in."

At that moment the pistol firing was heard down beyond the road, and old Molly clapped her hands as she exclaimed:

"The Silent Wolves are at work again, and they will be here soon, I'll warrant."

"Who are the Silent Wolves?" inquired the young lady.

The old woman hastened to give a description of the daring band in the most glowing terms, and she concluded by saying:

"No one knows who they are, but it is supposed that the band is made up of brave French officers and our Irish boys who were hunted like so many wolves by the cruel Colonel Barclay."

"But I heard that Colonel Barclay was a prisoner in the hands of the Irish rebels himself this very day," said the young lady.

"And so he was, but their young leader left him off because his fair niece—and a beautiful, good creature she is—begged him for her uncle. She is held up there on the mountain yet, to keep him on his good behavior."

"The generosity of the Silent Wolves does not seem to have much influence on the cruel colonel then," remarked the young lady.

"That it hasn't. Nothing will ever cure him of his cruelty until the hand of death is laid on him."

The conversation was then interrupted by a cry of alarm outside the house, and the twenty Silent Wolves were soon bearing down those who had been left behind to guard the place.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE MOUNTAIN ROAD.

When Paul Rodney heard the alarm cry outside, into the parlor he sprang, saying:

"Here are our friends now, Molly, and the young lady is safe."

The young lady smiled at the young fellow, and replied in gracious tones:

"I will never forget your kindness and bravery in my behalf, sir."

"Don't talk about that, miss, for the thanks is all the other way. I'll never forget how you begged the old colonel to spare my life out there."

While the young man was speaking off went the trooper's uniform, and he soon stood before them in his own proper costume.

Grasping the saber again, Paul took his stand near the doorway as if to guard against intrusion on the part of any of their enemies.

Then cries of terror and agony resounded through the house, as the Silent Wolves overpowered and slew all who opposed them.

Captain Barclay heard the cries in the closet, and he groaned in agony, as he said to himself:

"We are betrayed again, and what can my uncle be doing with his men?"

Old Molly listened with eager ears, smiling at the young lady from time to time, as she remarked:

"Don't you have the least fear, young lady, as I'll wager my life that those who are conquering now are your friends."

The unequal struggle outside was soon over, and when all was still, Paul Rodney opened the parlor door, crying:

"A thousand welcomes to the Silent Wolves from one of their own kind."

The words were scarcely uttered when the leader of the band appeared at the open door, and addressed Paul Rodney, in hoarse tones, saying:

"Where is the young lady?"

"Here she is all safe, sir."

The young French lady was standing in a corner behind Old Molly when the strange figure strode into the room.

A cry of terror escaped from the young woman as she stared at the repulsive form of the disguised man, and she clasped the old creature by the arm, as she gasped forth:

"What a horrid-looking being!"

The young leader of the Wolves advanced and bowed to the young lady, as he said to her, in his hoarse tones:

"Be not alarmed at our appearance, young lady, as I swear to you that we are all sworn friends of your late noble brother."

The words seemed to reassure the young French lady, as she smiled at the uncouth figure, saying:

"So I have been informed, and I will believe it fully if you will mention your name."

"That I cannot do, young lady, as we are all sworn to secrecy on that point, but I can tell you and vow to you on the honor of a French officer that you will be safe under our protection."

"You are a French officer, then?"

"Yes; I can tell you as much as that."

"Can you tell me where my brother is buried?"

"Your brother is buried under a large rock on the top of the mountain on a direct line from here. If you will come with us you will see his grave this very night."

"Trust him, young lady," pleaded the old woman, "and on my life you will not be sorry for it."

"I will, I will," answered the young woman, as she offered her hand to the wolfish figure.

The young man took the fair hand and pressed it to his wolfish mouth as he said:

"I hereby swear fidelity to you in behalf of the twenty Silent Wolves."

Paul Rodney then hastened to inform the leader of the Wolves about their prisoner, and he at once cried:

"Drag out the wretch, then!"

Paul Rodney soon dragged the prisoner out of the closet, crying:

"He was trying to whip the young lady away in the carriage when we put a stop to his trick."

Dragging the gag from the prisoner's mouth the Wolf addressed him in his hoarse, angry tones, saying:

"Captain Oscar Barclay, how dare you assail this young lady?"

"I did not assail her," growled the prisoner.

"You lie, you wretch. Did you not entice her here from France, under the plea of finding the dead body of her brother, and did you not then bring her out here to have her accused of being a French spy?"

"That was my uncle's work, and I had nothing to do with it. I did write to the young lady to come here, as she had written to me imploring me to find the dead body of her brother."

"While you knew it was impossible to find it, a strict search had already been made for it by your uncle and his men."

"I hoped to find it yet, sir."

"As for your uncle," continued the Wolf, "he is a lying wretch, if he is a soldier. I released him this evening on condition that he would take this young lady out of your clutches and send her safely back to France again."

"I was about to take the young lady back to the hotel in the town when that young scoundrel there and that old hag surprised me."

"Don't lie any more than you can help, Oscar Barclay," cried the old woman, "as I know that you were going to whip her away to another place, where you intended to force her to marry you."

"We are wasting time here," cried the leader of the Wolves, "as we must be away to the mountains before our foes set on us in overpowering numbers. You will come as our prisoner, Captain Barclay."

Another of the Wolves sprang into the room at the moment and whispered to his leader, saying:

"Our enemies are coming in force, captain."

"From whence?"

"From the town."

"Are the spare horses ready?"

"All ready, captain."

"Then we will mount and away at once. Gag the prisoner and out with him."

The young leader then turned to old Molly, saying:

"Away with you to the town, old friend, and you will hear from me soon again."

Old Molly embraced the young lady in an impetuous manner and then hastened out of the room, crying:

"Long live the Silent Wolves, and may they knock fury out of their enemies every time they ride against them by night or by day."

Captain Barclay was dragged out on the lawn and placed on one of his uncle's horses.

The young lady and Paul Rodney were also supplied with steeds from the stables behind the mansion. Just before start-out on the journey the young leader of the Wolves drew Paul Rodney aside and said to him:

"We have full confidence in you now, Paul Rodney, and you will be a member of our band hereafter. Ride beside the young lady during the journey and guard her against any stray bullets if we are forced to fight."

"That I will, captain, and a bullet will have to pass through my body before it will harm a hair of her head."

A bugle blast rang out from the road at the moment, and the clattering of horses' hoofs could be heard soon after.

One of the Silent Wolves rode up the lawn and whispered to his leader, saying:

"Over a hundred of the troopers are riding against us."

A nod or two from the leader was his only response as he sprang on his horse.

Then away over the lawn and behind the mansion dashed the strange cavalcade, with the prisoner, the young lady, and Paul Rodney riding within the square.

Up the broad avenue toward the mansion dashed over a hundred troopers, with Colonel Barclay at their head.

The stern old officer had recovered from the blow which had stunned him for the time, and he was on horseback again, more eager than ever to hunt down the Silent Wolves.

He could see the band riding away from the mansion and passing on around the buildings toward the lawn at the rear, and he urged on the troopers under him, as he cried aloud:

"They are making for the mountain again, and we must chase them down. Spur on, spur on, for dear life, and avenge those who have fallen."

The troopers did spur on, yelling and shouting the while to urge on the animals under them.

The moon was then out in full, and those at the foot of the mountain could perceive all the objects moving about above.

Just as the Silent Wolves reached a broad path leading up the hill, another loud bugle blast rang out above them. Then a shout of triumph burst from Colonel Barclay, and he turned to his followers, yelling:

"We have the rascals hemmed in now, and we will cut them to pieces."

The leader of the Silent Wolves cast one glance up at a large body of troopers who were riding down the path against him, and he then made a silent motion with his sword.

The Silent Wolves then turned to the right and swept along at the foot of the mountain.

On after them pressed the troopers below, while Colonel Barclay cried out to one of his men:

"Ride up to the officer in command of that troop and tell him to ride back up the mountain again and watch the paths leading up while we will chase the rascals up to him."

Away rode the man up the mountain side, until he reached the troopers coming down, to deliver his order.

Along the foot of the mountain dashed the Silent Wolves in perfect order, and on after them thundered the enraged troopers, all swearing to avenge their fallen comrades.

The party above soon gained the top of the mountain again, but the officer in command found it impossible to obey the order given him.

The troopers could not ride along the mountain top, as huge rocks barred their way, and the officer in charge was compelled to push along over the path before him, in the hope of finding an opening on the right.

After riding about two miles the leader of the Wolves made another motion with his sword, and the troop dashed up a steep path.

The troopers were not far behind at the time, as they had all spurred their horses with great vigor.

Colonel Barclay cast his eyes up again, and an imprecation escaped from his lips when he could not perceive the other troop on the top of the mountain.

Up the second path the silent riders pushed, still moving in compact order, and gliding over the rough ground as if their horses were tireless.

When the troopers reached the foot of the mountain all

their horses were well blown, and the impatient colonel fumed and raged as he urged his men up the steep ascent, crying:

"Spur on, you rascals, or we will let the dogs escape us again."

"I see they have a lady and two other prisoners with them, colonel," remarked an officer, riding behind them.

"Yes, yes, I suppose the scoundrels have captured my nephew and his promised bride. Spur on, spur on, and our friends above will head the rascals off."

The troopers did spur on, but their jaded steeds were soon left far behind by the fleet horses under the Silent Wolves.

The colonel looked in vain for his friends on the top of the mountain, as the officer in charge of the troop found it impossible to reach the path the fugitives were then taking.

About ten minutes after the Silent Wolves reached the top of the mountain, Olive Barclay was seated alone in the rendezvous of the outlaws, with her eyes fixed on the opening as she muttered to herself:

"Dion promised to be back before this, and I do pray that no ill has befallen him."

The tramping of muffled hoofs was heard at the moment, and then into the rendezvous rode the silent cavalcade with their new recruit and their prisoner.

Olive Barclay stared at the fair rider for a moment or two, and then ran forward to clasp the French girl in her arms as she exclaimed:

"Dear Marguerite, is it possible that I see you up here?"

"Dear Olive," returned the French girl, "I knew that you were up here, and I came to see you."

The leader of the Wolves laid his hand on Olive's arm at the moment, and whispered into her ear, saying:

"Remember that you are not to betray me, even to Marguerite herself."

The two young girls were soon conducted into another apartment, and Olive Barclay did not notice that her brother was in the hands of the Wolves.

The young officer had been blindfolded.

The young ladies had scarcely retired when a man in the garb of a peasant entered the rendezvous and approached the leader of the Wolves, saying:

"Captain, the whole mountain is swarming with troopers, and there is one party riding along the path leading right to this spot."

The young leader flung off his wolfish disguise on the instant, and sprang to the opening of the rendezvous, crying:

"Out with the lights here and close the passage on me."

The daring young fellow was soon out on the mountain path and peering ahead, when he perceived the troopers under Colonel Barclay riding toward him.

"The hunt is growing warm," he muttered, "and I must throw them off the scent in some way."

Colonel Barclay was advancing toward the rendezvous when a rough-looking lad appeared suddenly before him crying:

"Blood and thunder, whoever thought to see you soldiers up here so near the riding ground of the headless horsemen?"

Colonel Barclay recognized the lad on the instant, and he cried out:

"Seize that young rascal, as it is old Molly's grandson, and I believe he is a spy for the Silent Wolves."

CHAPTER X.

DARBY MALLOY AS A GUIDE.

No comedian could put on a simpler expression than the simple lad calling himself Darby Malloy, when two of the troopers seized him.

Calling a halt, Colonel Barclay addressed the prisoner in his fiercest tones, crying:

"What are you doing up here, you rascal?"

"Sure, sir, I come up here to join the headless horsemen what some people call the Silent Wolves."

The stern colonel gazed at the fellow for some moments, as he said to himself:

"Is this fellow a knave or a fool, and what can be his object in appearing before me if he is the former?"

He then addressed the lad again, presenting a pistol at his head as he demanded:

"Who sent you up to join the wolves?"

"Me granny, to be sure."

"Did she tell you where you would find them?"

"That she did, your honor, and I was going right straight to them when I ran across you."

"Where are they, then?"

"In the glen below here, sir."

"Can you guide us to that glen?"

"To be sure, sir. And are ye all going to see the headless horseman, also?"

Colonel Barclay glared again at the simple-looking lad as he said to himself:

"This fellow is either an idiot or a very clever actor. I will keep an eye on him, and Heaven help him if he attempts any tricks with me."

Then addressing Darby again, he kept the pistol at his head as he cried:

"If you don't guide me to the Silent Wolves at once I will blow your brains out."

The lad appeared to quail before the pistol and he then cried in cowardly tones:

"Don't point the little gun at me, sir, and I'll take you to the glen at once. Sure, what was I doing at all in the way of harm in coming up to join the boys when me old gran told me?"

"Lead on there, and remember that I will put a bullet through your head in you attempt to slip away. Seize him on each side, men, and point your pistols at his head also."

The two troopers who had seized Darby dragged the prisoner down a path pointed out by him, while the colonel gave orders to the men behind him to be on the alert against a surprise.

It is hardly necessary to say that the lad was leading them right away from the entrance to the secret rendezvous.

On reaching the black rocks, the path descended in such an abrupt manner as to render it impossible for the troopers to move with their horses.

Colonel Barclay called a halt, and then addressed the prisoner, saying:

"You infernal rascal, don't you see that the horses cannot move down there?"

"What's to hinder them, sir?" inquired the lad in apparent amazement.

"The fellow is a fool," muttered the colonel, "and yet he may be telling the truth. It is possible, and even probable that the rebels meet in the glen below at night, and that their rendezvous is close at hand."

Colonel Barclay then turned and consulted with some of his officers.

It was soon decided to dismount and proceed on foot to the glen below.

When Darby saw the men dismounting and preparing to walk down the steep path, he cried:

"Tare an' ages, sure you're not afraid to face the horses down that little bit of a hill?"

"Would you dare ride one of them down before us?"

"To be sure I would, sir," was the bold answer from Darby, "and only too glad to get a chance for a ride on a good horse."

"Then we'll try you, you rascal."

Colonel Barclay then gave orders for half of the attacking party to proceed at once down into the glen as quietly as possible, and turned to one of his officers, saying:

"We will see if this mad fool is wild enough to ride a horse down that path."

Darby appeared to be delighted when the troopers placed him on one of the horses, and he faced the animal toward the narrow part as he cried aloud:

"I'll show you lads how to ride, and bad cess to me if the Silent Wolves would think twice about following me down here."

Sending forth a wild yell, the daring young fellow then forced the horse down the steep path, urging the animal forward by kicking him on the sides with all his might.

Colonel Barclay and his men expected to see the horse and rider rolling down the path every moment, but the animal kept on his feet and dashed along in a gallant manner.

Down and down they rushed, Darby yelling and shouting like a fiend.

Those below in the glen soon got out of the path of the rider as he dashed toward them, and not a hand was raised to stop him as the animal plunged on deeper in the glen.

The colonel and the other men descended after the rider as fast as they could, the former shouting to those below at the top of his voice:

"Stop the rascal or he will make off with the horse."

Several of the troopers in the glen ran after Darby, one of them yelling:

"Hold up there, you rascal!"

The wild lad pressed on, however, without paying any attention to the cry sent after him.

When he was out of pistol shot, he turned in the saddle and yelled back:

"Come on, me brave soldiers, and I'll lead you to the spot where the Silent Wolves are to be found. Follow me if you want to join them."

On reaching the party below, Colonel Barclay formed them in line of march, and led them on in the direction taken by the wild rider.

The horses above were well trained animals, and they were easily guarded in the narrow path by about ten of the troopers.

Colonel Barclay and his party, numbering nearly a hundred men in themselves, pushed boldly on through the glen.

It was fully half an hour after leaving the path above when the weary party became convinced that the mountain stream led down to the valley below in wild torrents, and that no rendezvous was to be found in its path.

Colonel Barclay stormed and fumed at the simple lad who had led them the wild-goose chase, and he gave orders to return toward the path again, grinding his teeth as he muttered to himself:

"I fear we have been led into another trap."

Weary, indeed, were the troopers on foot when they reached the foot of the steep path again.

The foremost trooper was about half-way up the ascent, when a cry of alarm burst out above, followed by a pistol shot and yells of terror.

"Halt!"" cried Colonel Barclay, on the impulse of the moment. "No—no; press on to help our friends, as the Silent Wolves must be at us again."

The men did press on with a shout, while the cries of alarm above grew louder and louder.

Then down the steep descent rushed some three of the troopers, who had been left above to guard the horses.

On after them rushed the animals, sending forth startled neighs, as if forced forward by some power that they could not resist.

Wild and frantic were the yells that burst from the troopers below as they saw the maddening steeds plunging down the path on them, and every man turned and fled toward the glen in a helter-skelter race.

Fast as they ran, however, the onrushing steeds flew faster still, and they soon burst in among their former riders, trampling them down and kicking them aside in fearful confusion.

When the horses swept down the deep descent the gallant leader of the troopers was swept along in front of those who were striving to get out of the way of the frantic steeds, and he was the first to reach a point of safety behind a tree in the glen below.

And fearful was the anguish of his soul as he saw his sturdy troopers kicked and trampled by the horses they had tended to and fed on that same day.

The rushing steeds did not pause on reaching the glen, but swept along down toward the stream, led on by the colonel's own gray hunter.

Several of them stumbled and fell in the steep descent, and rolled over on the unfortunate troopers who had been maimed before.

It was several minutes before Colonel Barclay could look on the scene presented to him with anything but frantic eyes, and he then cried to the survivors:

"Rally, men, rally, and we will catch some of the horses soon again."

A mocking laugh burst out from the hill-top above them, and then a merry voice cried out:

"Brave colonel, didn't I tell you I'd lead you to the spot where the Silent Wolves were to be found? Did you see the headless horsemen riding along down there a little while ago?"

A yell of rage burst from Colonel Barclay and those around him who were able to utter when they looked up and beheld the simple-looking youth on the top of the path, with the twenty Silent Wolves ranged around him on horseback, and with their swords flashing in the moonlight.

Then amid the yells and groans the voice of the taunting lad could be heard above the din, crying:

"Hunt them down like wolves. Come up now, me brave colonel, and do a little of your old work. What mighty fine sport you will have when you come up."

The twenty Silent Wolves sat above on their horses without making the least sign, while several other active figures hurled down the rocks on their enemies.

Still not a voice was heard from above except that of the simple lad, who kept crying:

"This is the finest sport I ever saw, Colonel Barclay, and it is better than hunting wolves or rebels any day. Are you alive yet?"

Colonel Barclay had managed to gain a place of refuge at the time with a remnant of his former band, and he raised his voice, in furious tones, as he answered:

"I am alive, you infernal demons, and I will live to scourge you all for this night's work."

"Death to the wolves was your signal," cried Darby Malloy in answer, "and now we will cry:

"'Death to the cruel tyrants who would give no mercy to the brave men fighting in lawful warfare against them.'"

Daylight was breaking when Colonel Barclay and the remnant of his troop reached the town on foot, and not a single one of their horses was recovered that night.

CHAPTER XI.

A FUTILE APPEAL.

"Would to heaven, Olive, that I could consent to your appeal and leave this country, but is it impossible, I assure you. I am pledged to remain here with the brave hearts who are fighting with me, and here I will remain until all our dead comrades are avenged."

Thus spoke the young leader of the Wolves some three nights after he had vanquished his enemies in such a disastrous manner.

The young man was seated with Olive Barclay in a small private apartment in the rendezvous on the mountain, and he had cast aside his wolfish disguise, for the time appearing in the character of Darby Malloy.

A deep sigh escaped from the young girl, and she resumed her appeal by saying:

"But you certainly will permit me to tell Marguerite that you are alive?"

"No, no, my dear. Much as I love my sister, she must mourn me as dead for the time."

"I cannot understand why, Dion."

"Because I wish to remain as one dead for the present, and fight on with the gallant men who are sworn with me to avenge their dead comrades who were butchered in cold blood by your uncle and his friends."

"But Marguerite would not betray you, and think how great her joy would be to know that you are still living, dear Dion."

"Marguerite is a sweet, dear girl, but she is not over discreet. She would be certain to tell someone in France that I am alive, and then my general would hear it. I would then be blamed for not using my best efforts in striving to escape from this country."

"You must, dear Olive. In a few days from hence I hope to send her safely to Dublin under the guidance of Paul Rodney, who appears to be a very able, intelligent young fellow, and from thence she can get over to England, where she will be safe from the persecutions of your brother."

"Then you fear that my brother will annoy her again if you set him at liberty?"

"I do. He plotted to bring her over here to Ireland after she had twice refused him in Paris. Your uncle is in the plot, and he will seize my sister if possible, and keep her as a prisoner."

"Then that is why you will not release Oscar at present, at my request?"

"That is the reason. The Silent Wolves fight in the open field, and we slay our enemies with sword and pistol; but we do not put them to death after capture, much as some of them deserve it."

The young girl sighed again, and remarked:

"It was very cruel of my uncle to try and hang you after you told him that you were a French officer, even though he does hate the French so much."

"Can you tell me why he hates us so much, Olive, as I understand that he has some private reasons in addition to the fact that we are at war with his nation?"

The young girl blushed a little before she replied, saying:

"It is a painful subject, but it may be well to explain why my uncle hates Frenchmen so much."

"Is it a family secret, then?"

"It is a family affair, but not so much of a secret, and the truth is this: My uncle married a beautiful young Irish girl

when he was young, and they had one son. They did not live very happily together, and——"

"I shouldn't think they would," interposed the young Frenchman, with a merry smile, "if your uncle did not have a more amiable temper at that time than he has now."

The young girl nodded her head, and continued:

"In any case, they did not live many years together, as my uncle's young wife ran away from him with a handsome Frenchman while they were stopping in Paris. It was said that she fled to America with the Frenchman, taking her infant boy with her, and it was afterwards reported that she returned here to Ireland to die with her own people."

"And her son?"

"My uncle never saw his son afterwards. He searched for him in America, and in this country, but he could never find a trace of him. I really believe that he would not be so cruel to-day if his son had been left to him."

"Perhaps not," remarked the young man. "Did your uncle ever encounter the Frenchman?"

"He did, as they afterward met in Paris and fought a duel there with swords. My uncle was severely wounded in that duel, and that adds to his bitterness."

"Then why did he not fight his opponent again, when he recovered from his wound?"

"He did seek the Frenchman, as I understand, but he learned that he was killed in battle soon after."

The young man pondered a few moments and then remarked: "I cannot conceive why your uncle should hate all Frenchmen on that account, as many of his own countrymen would be only too glad to run away with his handsome young Irish wife."

"Let us not speak any more on that subject," said the young girl, with a blush. "Now can I not prevail on you to leave Ireland with your sister?"

"You seem to be in a great hurry to get rid of me, Olive, and that is not kind."

"You know I am not in a hurry to get rid of you, and I would be only too happy to fly with you to France if you will consent to leave this country."

"You are tempting me too much," replied the young man, with a groan. "But I cannot break the pledge I have made to the brave fellows I now lead. What would they be without me, if I must say it myself?"

"Could they not disband and fly to France with you, dear Dion?"

"They could not, as most of them are sworn to remain here and fight against the English rule until they die or conquer."

"Then it is hopeless for me to plead any more on the subject."

"It is hopeless, Olive. Here I must remain until the struggle is over. Were I in a different position I would beg of you to become my bride at once, but I could not ask you to share this life of poverty and danger."

The young girl blushed again, and then responded in faint tones, saying:

"Dear Dion, when you released my uncle, I promised to become your bride. I am willing to fulfill that promise and share your dangers, in the hope that I can then prevail on you to fly with me to France."

The young man's only response was to clasp the fair girl in his arms and imprint a kiss on her lips.

Olive Barclay felt that it would be useless to plead with him any more at that time, and she remained silent on the subject under discussion.

During the three days that elapsed since the crushing defeat of the troopers on the mountain, Colonel Barclay was

more vigorous than ever in his pursuit of the Silent Wolves. The whole mountain fairly swarmed with horse and foot soldiers, who searched night and day for the hiding place of the daring band.

The enraged officer also sought for old Molly Malloy and her grandson, but he could not find a trace of the active old creature and her roguish boy.

The Silent Wolves were wise enough to keep under cover during that time, as it would have been madness for them to sally forth when they were certain to be assailed at all points by overwhelming numbers.

Marguerite St. Mars remained in the rendezvous with her friend, Olive Barclay.

The young girls had been schoolmates in Paris in their younger days, and they were very much attached to each other.

Captain Oscar Barclay was kept in strict confinement in the rendezvous, and he was not even permitted to see his sister.

The leader of the Wolves was very anxious to send his beautiful young sister away to a place of safety, as he dreaded the consequences of her falling into the power of the Barclays again. It was fully a week, however, before the vigilance of the English relaxed on the mountain, and even then most of the paths therefrom were guarded by the troopers.

On a certain stormy night an old woman in the garb of a peasant appeared on horseback in a village some ten miles from the garrison town, and she was accompanied by a man of forty-five, who passed as her son.

The man wore a heavy reddish beard, a large gray overcoat, and a rough felt hat.

He had all the appearance of a drover on the lookout for good cattle, and he represented himself as being in that line of trade on stopping at the principal tavern in the village.

The rain was falling in torrents when the travelers entered the tavern, and the drover soon inquired if his old mother could not have a snug bedroom for the night.

The travelers were accommodated as desired, and the old woman soon retired to her room.

Very early on the following morning Captain Oscar Barclay and the spy from Dublin entered the tavern.

The spy was disguised as a trooper, and he had his ears and eyes about him at all times.

When the drover came down from his bedroom he started slightly on seeing Captain Barclay, and the spy noticed him without pretending to do so.

Captain Barclay and the pretended trooper soon mounted their horses again as if to proceed on a journey.

The drover and his mother left the tavern soon after.

They had scarcely left the village when Captain Barclay and a dozen troopers dashed out after them on the road.

The spy was riding beside the young officer as they approached the travelers, and he addressed him, saying:

"I am certain of my man, sir, and you may hang me if that is not Paul Rodney."

The pretended drover and his mother were soon surrounded by the troopers. Captain Barclay addressed the man in rough tones, crying: "Paul Rodney, you are my prisoner."

The spy sprang from his horse and attempted to pull the disguise from the young man's face, but Paul let fly with his blackthorn stick and stretched the rascal on the ground, as he cried: "I'll floor you, anyway."

Before the young man could make any further resistance, four of the troopers sprang at him, and overpowered him, while he cried:

"For goodness sake, don't harm my poor mother, as she had nothing to do with my acts."

"Your mother!" exclaimed Captain Oscar Barclay, as he seized the pretended old woman and drew her from the horse. "Whether she is your mother or not I will honor her by placing her before me on the saddle. Ha, ha, my dear Marguerite, you could not escape me in that way. When your friend on the mountain released me before daybreak this morning, I felt assured that you were on the way to Dublin, and here I came after you."

"You infamous wretch," cried the disguised French lady, as she struggled to free herself from the young officer's grasp, "I will hate you now more than ever."

CHAPTER XII.

OLD MOLLY APPEARS AGAIN.

The wildest excitement prevailed in the town of Dranmore during the day when it was announced that one of the Silent Wolves had been captured and recognized.

When it was discovered that the prisoner was no other than Paul Rodney, the most popular young man in the neighborhood, the most intense interest was aroused as to what his fate would be.

It then leaked out that Paul was arrested while in the company of a beautiful young French lady, who was disguised as an old countrywoman at the time.

Some asserted that the young French lady was a spy, working in behalf of the Silent Wolves and the French government, and that she would be put to death also.

Tom Foley's tavern was crowded in the evening, and the whole subject of conversation was the important arrests made in the morning.

"Would it be possible for the Silent Wolves to rescue the brave fellow?" inquired one.

No answer was given to the question for the time, and then old Molly Malloy burst out of the back room as he cried:

"I tell you it is possible for the Silent Wolves to do almost anything, and I'll tell you again that Paul Rodney will never die by the hangman's rope."

"Molly, Molly," said the landlord, as he drew the old woman aside, "don't you know you are foolish to be coming forward here at such a time?"

"What should I be afraid of?"

"Don't you know very well that Colonel Barclay is after you?"

"To the mischief with Colonel Barclay and all the villains around him."

"That's what I say, granny," cried Darby Malloy, as he entered the tavern with a bold swagger. The landlord and the old woman both started at seeing the fearless young fellow thus entering the public tavern when a price was set on his head.

Molly drew the young man aside at once, and whispered to him, saying:

"For goodness sake what brings you down here now, and a reward on your head dead or alive!"

A confident smile appeared on the young fellow's face as he replied, saying:

"I came down to look after my friends, Molly, and don't you be troubled about me."

"But don't you know that the spies are around?"

"What of that? I have friends around also, and it is my duty to come here now. You are in more danger than I am, as you cannot change your face as readily as I can."

The old woman shook her head in a solemn manner and responded, saying:

"You will have your own way, but I am afraid it will lead to your destruction. Colonel Barclay dare not hurt a hair of my head if I was in his power this minute."

"Then you would not fear to take him a message from me to-night?"

"Not a bit of it. I'll go right up to the barracks now and tell him whatever you say."

"But will he let you out again?"

"He will, and no mistake."

"Where is the young French lady now?"

"They have her up at Colonel Barclay's house, and there are over two hundred troopers about the place under the command of Captain Barclay. Why in the mischief did you let that young villain off?"

"It was a mistake, Molly, but I felt certain that Paul and the young lady would be thirty miles away on the road to Dublin when I released him before daylight this morning."

"Well, well," said the old woman, "there is no use in crying now, but what are you going to do?"

"I am going to release Paul Rodney this very night, if it is possible."

"Why, man alive, he is in the guardroom at the barracks now, with over a thousand soldiers watching over him every minute."

"If he had ten thousand watching over him I will release him before morning," answered the young man in very confident tones.

About half an hour after they left the tavern Colonel Barclay was riding toward his mansion, escorted by about thirty troopers, when old Molly suddenly appeared on the road before him, crying:

"I want a word with you, colonel."

The stern old officer drew up his troop on the instant, and glared at the old creature as he cried:

"Let me hear what you have to say, then."

"The leader of the Wolves asks you to set Paul Rodney free, in return for sparing your life and your nephew's when you were both in his power. Will you do it?"

"I will not. Paul Rodney will die in the morning as sure as the stars shine over us now. I only wish I had hold of your rascally grandson, and he would die with him also."

"Then bend down your head to me."

Colonel Barclay did bend down his head and the old woman whispered to him earnestly for some minutes, while she concluded by saying:

"Now you see that I am speaking the truth about your son, and I ask you again to release Paul Rodney."

Colonel Barclay pondered some moments with his head bent on his breast, and he then addressed the old woman in stern tones, saying:

"Your story is plausible enough, but I must have further proof before I believe you. In the meantime, I will keep you under guard for the present."

Old Molly was dragged along to the mansion and placed in the strongroom, while two troopers were stationed at the doorway to keep watch over her.

Colonel Barclay retired to his library, and he flung himself on an easy chair to ponder over what the old woman had told him.

It was fully half an hour before he sprang up again, muttering aloud:

"I'll make the old hag one offer, and see if I cannot drag the secret out of her. Would that I had her grandson in my power, and then I would compel her to speak out."

The anxious man then summoned one of the troopers, and ordered him to bring the prisoner into the library.

In less than five minutes the soldier was back again with a startled expression on his countenance, as he reported that the old woman had escaped from the strongroom.

The anxious officer then gave orders for having the house thoroughly searched, and the premises outside, also, when he flung himself into the easy chair again and continued to mutter aloud:

"I should remember that the old hag was a servant in this house before I got possession of it, and it is more than probable that there is a secret door leading into the strongroom. What do you want, Oscar?"

His nephew had just entered the library, and he replied to the question, saying:

"I came to make a request of you, sir."

"What is it, then?"

"I would like your permission to take the young lady away to Dublin at once."

"What is that for?"

"Because I fear that those rascally wolves will take her from me again. She imagines that the spirit of her brother is watching to refuse to become my wife, no matter what threats I may make."

"Then you have threatened her?"

"I had your permission to tell her that she would be treated as a spy and put to death if she did not become my wife."

Colonel Barclay grinned and responded, saying:

"And you were right to do so, as I believe that she is a spy. Do you know what I have been thinking about, Oscar?"

"What is that, sir?"

"I don't believe that her brother died on the gallows at all that night, and that he is still alive."

The young officer started at the proposition, and his face was very pale as he responded, saying:

"It may be possible, sir, that he was cut down before he was dead, as his body was taken away. Can it be that he is one of the Wolves?"

"I believe he is, and that explains our hearing his voice the other night."

The door was burst open at the moment, and an exclamation of rage burst from the colonel as Darby Malloy appeared before them.

Springing forward a moment after, Colonel Barclay seized the daring young fellow by the throat as he demanded:

"What are you doing here, you scoundrel, and do you not know that you come to your death?"

"Sure, I came after my granny," gasped Darby, "and don't choke me till I tell you the news."

CHAPTER XIII.

DARBY AS A MESSENGER.

"Who is the message from, you rascal?"

"From the Silent One, to be sure."

"And who is the Silent One?"

"The brave chap that leads Silent Wolves to battle and knocks blazes out of your troopers."

"Silence, you rascal," thundered the colonel, as he proceeded to read the note, which ran as follows:

"Colonel Barclay:—I hereby notify you that you must not put Paul Rodney to death, or your own son will perish at the same time. He is now in my hands as a prisoner, and I swear to execute him within an hour after Paul Rodney is put to death."

"The young man is not aware that he is your son, but I will tell him the truth just before his death, and I will also inform him that he can thank his own father for his untimely end.

"It was old Molly Malloy who put me on the track of the youth, and I seized him this evening to hold him as against Paul Rodney.

"If the old woman is still in your power she will tell you that I am stating the truth.

"Release Paul Rodney at once, and I pledge you that your son will be restored to you at the time appointed and mentioned by Molly Malloy.

"If you do not release him, and the bearer of this as well, he will be put to death.

"You should be aware that, although you have not kept your word of honor with me, you will never have to say the same to the

"Silent One."

Colonel Barclay was dumfounded on reading the note, and he kept staring at the messenger in a vacant manner as he muttered to himself:

"Can it be possible that the audacious rascal tells the truth, and that my son is really in his power? It must be true, and that old wretch, Molly Malloy, has betrayed him in order to baffle me."

The perplexed man flung himself on a chair again and pondered deeply for some time.

He then sprang to his feet and ordered his nephew out of the room, while he said to Darby Malloy:

"Remain here, as I want to ask you a few questions."

"To be sure, sir, that's what the Silent One told me to do."

"Did he tell you to answer my questions?"

"To be sure, sir, provided you don't ask me too much entirely."

"Do you know if the Silent Wolves captured a prisoner this evening?"

"That I do, sir, and he was as fine a looking young chap as you ever laid your eyes on."

"Where did they capture him?"

"I couldn't say, sir, as I wasn't out with them."

"Then they were out to-night?"

"To be sure, and they are out every night taking their exercise down in the glen. Ha, ha, ha! Wasn't that a nice joke I played on you the other night?"

"You infernal scoundrel!" thundered Colonel Barclay, "I don't know how I can keep from blowing your brains out."

"That's just what the Silent One said to me, sir, but he also told me that your pistol wouldn't go off."

A fierce imprecation burst from the anxious man, and he turned to read the note again, and to ponder over the contents.

Colonel Barclay's meditations were soon interrupted by a sharp knock at the door, and he cried:

"Who's there?"

"It is I, uncle," was the answer, "and I beg to consult with you at once on important business."

"Come in, then."

The young man entered and drew his uncle aside to whisper into his ear, saying:

"I think I have made an important discovery, sir."

"Well, what is it?"

"Don't show any alarm or look at the fellow, but I think I recognize who he is."

"Who is he, then?"

"I firmly believe that he is no other than Captain Dion St. Mars himself."

Colonel Barclay started and glared at the young officer for a moment or so before he replied:

"You must be mad. How could any Frenchman act so much like an Irish lad as this young fellow?"

"Did I not tell you that Dion St. Mars was a splendid actor, and he has been long enough in Ireland to pick up the manners and the accent of the natives. Don't look at him, or he will suspect what we are saying."

"It seems impossible to me, Oscar, and yet when I think of this young fellow's boldness, I have sometimes imagined that he is not what he pretends to be. I will accuse him at once."

"For heaven's sake do not, uncle, as that would only put him on his guard. I have conceived a way of making him betray himself, if he is really Dion St. Mars, as I firmly believe he is."

"How do you propose to do it?"

"Please leave that to me, sir, and you go on with him as if I came to you on other business. Allude to the young lady as I pass out so as to make it appear that we were talking about her."

"Very good."

The young officer then turned to leave the room, and his uncle cried:

"I leave her in your hands now, but I would prefer to keep her here in the mansion."

Oscar Barclay passed out of the room without making any reply, and the cunning old officer turned to Darby again, saying:

"And so you expect me to take you to the barracks and release Paul Rodney?"

"That's what the Silent One said you would do, sir."

"Was he certain of it?"

"Pretty certain, sir, for I am sure he wouldn't send me here if he was sure you wouldn't injure me, because I played you a trick the other night."

Loud cries of alarm were heard in the hallway at the moment, and then Captain Barclay burst into the library in a state of intense excitement, as he exclaimed in distracted tones:

"Oh, uncle, uncle, it is horrible! The dear young lady has just killed herself by plunging a dagger into her breast."

"What young lady?" demanded the colonel.

"Marguerite St. Mars."

A cry of rage and agony escaped from the disguised young French officer, and he sprang at Oscar Barclay and seized him by the throat as he cried:

"You infamous wretch, this is your work and I will have your life for thus driving my dear sister to death."

CHAPTER XIV.

STRANGE COMPLICATIONS.

After seizing Oscar Barclay by the throat the enraged leader of the Wolves had him on the floor in an instant and flashed out a dagger at the same time.

The young officer yelled with terror and called on his uncle to save him.

Colonel Barclay did spring at the young Frenchman as soon as possible, seizing him by the arms from behind as he cried:

"In here, men, and secure this rascal."

A cry of agony then burst from Oscar Barclay, as he felt the dagger piercing his breast, while the young Frenchman cried:

"Thus do I avenge my dear sister."

Colonel Barclay dragged the young man back from his victim, crying:

"You confounded fool, you have betrayed yourself very nicely!"

Then into the room rushed several of the troopers, and they all set on the heroic young Frenchman, who was struggling with Colonel Barclay in a desperate manner as he kept crying:

"You perfidious hound, you drove my poor sister to self-destruction by your treachery, and no human power can keep me from slaying you."

As the young Frenchman uttered the threat he burst away from Colonel Barclay and the troopers, using the dagger on them with terrible effect.

Just as he reached the door, as if to go in search of the dead young lady, Marguerite St. Mars appeared before him, crying:

"Is that the voice of the dead I heard in here again?"

Dion St. Mars then sprang to embrace his sister, speaking in excited but natural tones as he cried:

"You are alive, my dear sister, and you did not slay yourself as they told me."

Other troopers crowded into the room at the moment, and seized the desperate young Frenchman.

Then out rang Colonel Barclay's voice in mocking tones, as he cried:

"That was a dear joke on your part, Oscar, but it has succeeded."

Oscar raised his head from the floor, feeling his breast at the same time, as he cried:

"His weapon did not strike home, thanks to the plate I wear, and now part of the mystery is explained, as there stands Captain Dion St. Mars, who was playing the part of Darby Malloy."

The desperate young Frenchman appeared to be so rejoiced at finding his sister alive that he did not dream of resistance while he was embracing her.

Then Colonel Barclay's troopers set on him afresh, dragging him away from his sister's embrace as they disarmed and overpowered him.

"Drag him out to the gallows," yelled the stern colonel, "and we will see if the Silent Wolves will save him now. We will cry death to one of the Wolves, at least, to-night."

The troopers were dragging the young prisoner out of the room when Olive Barclay burst in with a scream and clasped the young man around the neck, exclaiming:

"My dear Dion, they must not put you to death, as I will beg of my uncle to save you."

"You will beg in vain then, girl."

The stern old officer then seized the girl and drew her away from the prisoner, as he continued:

"He will die to-night if he were your own brother."

"But he spared your life, uncle, when you were in his power."

"I care not for that, girl."

"He spared my brother's life also."

"I care not for that, I tell you, as I must and I will do my duty."

The young girl flung herself on her knees and clasped her uncle's legs as she cried, in imploring tones:

"Oh, uncle—uncle, spare his life, for my sake, as he is my husband."

"Your husband!" gasped the stern old officer.

"Yes—yes, I swear he is. I loved him when I met him in Paris a year ago, and I became his wife two nights ago up on the mountain. He is a Frenchman and your enemy, but he is a noble gentleman and a brave officer."

The troopers were dragging the prisoner out of the room when the colonel cried:

"Hold, there!"

Pushing his niece rudely away from him, he strode up to the prisoner and demanded:

"Is it true that my niece is your wife?"

"It is true, sir."

"You do not deny that you were one of the Silent Wolves?"

"I do not deny it. You persecuted the French officers in this country and their Irish friends in the most inhuman manner, and we banded together to defend ourselves against your tyranny."

"Then you confess that you are an infamous spy?"

"I only confess that we fought you as brave men, that we never put one of our prisoners to death, and that we spared even you when you were in our power."

"Oh, that is true, dear uncle," pleaded Olive, "and spare him in turn."

"Silence, you wretched girl. Retire to your room at once, and I will punish you hereafter. The prisoner will die to-night, even were he my own son."

"Then your own son will die with him," cried old Molly Malloy, as she sprang into the room again.

"You here again, you old wretch," cried Colonel Barclay.

"Yes, I am here again, and I tell you that you must not put that young man to death. If you do your own son will be put to death with him."

The old woman spoke in such thrilling and earnest tones that the stern old officer quailed before her.

Colonel Barclay was meditating with a dark frown on his stern brow, when the old woman stole to his side and whispered to him, saying:

"Did not your wife fly with a Frenchman long ago, you merciless tyrant?"

"What of that, you old wretch, and how dare you recall that subject to me?"

"I must recall it. Did not your wife bear your son away with her at the time?"

"What has that got to do with this young man here?"

"It has a good deal. May not it be possible that the young prisoner is your own son?"

The stern colonel started as if he had received a blow of a dagger on hearing the question, and he then turned fiercely on the old woman and hissed forth:

"Can it be possible that this gallant young fellow is really my own son? But that is out of the question, and this old wretch was humbugging me."

"Why don't you answer me, Peter Barclay," continued the old woman. "Is he not a brave youth, if he did fight against you, and would you not be proud of him should he turn out to be your own son, for all he is a French officer?"

"He is a spy and he must die," hissed the stern old officer.

At that moment a slight commotion was heard outside, and then Oscar Barclay pushed into the room and addressed his uncle in agitated tones, saying:

"I have important news for you, colonel."

"What is it?"

"Paul Rodney, the young prisoner, has escaped from the guardhouse in Dranmore, and the Silent Wolves are out again to-night."

Old Molly Malloy danced around in triumph and waved her hand aloft as she cried:

"Glory to Paul Rodney and the Silent Wolves. Now we will see if the brave young man there is put to death to-night, whether he is your son or not."

Colonel Barclay was about to give orders to seize old Molly when she darted suddenly out into the hall and disappeared up the stairs, crying:

"The Silent Wolves are out again, and Paul Rodney will be their captain to-night. The brave young Frenchman will never die on the gallows."

"Long live the Silent Wolves," cried the prisoner, "and their new chief as well. Paul Rodney will lead them to victory to-night."

"Silence!" thundered Colonel Barclay. "If the Wolves are out to-night we will hunt them all to death, and you will be the first to suffer. Oscar, drag your sister away and put her under guard."

The stern man then gave orders for dragging the prisoner out for execution, while he caused all the troopers in and around the house to get ready for action.

Once more was the chief of the Wolves dragged out under the tree with a rope around his neck.

His wife and sister were not permitted to see him again, as they were both held as prisoners in the mansion.

When the brave young French soldier stood under the fatal tree again he cast a defiant glance around at his enemies, as he cried:

"If I should die to-night, and it is not so written, I call on the Silent Wolves to avenge me."

Then out rang the old woman's voice as if coming from the top of the house, as she cried:

"Peter Barclay! Peter Barclay, now beware how you put that young man to death, as you are signing the death warrant for your own son."

"String him up!" cried the stern officer. "He will die now, Molly, unless you give me better proof about what you told me last."

The old woman did not answer from her hiding-place at the time, but the prisoner cried:

"To the death I defy you, cruel tyrants, and again will I escape from a disgraceful death as I did before. I now call on the Silent Wolves to aid me."

As if in answer to the appeal out rang a wild shout from the grove beyond, followed by several musket shots from the same direction.

Several of the troopers fell under the fire, and Colonel Barclay cried out:

"Charge on the wretches in the grove. Guard the prisoner to the death!"

CHAPTER XV.

AT WORK IN EARNEST.

The prisoner himself was not idle during the attack, and he had a friend near as well.

One of the troopers, who made himself very busy around the prisoner by slipping the rope on him before the alarm was given, whispered into his ear at the same time, saying:

"Don't despair yet, captain, as you have a friend near who will help you."

The captain of the Wolves did not respond save by one glance of intelligence, but he waited patiently for action on the part of his unknown friend.

When the first shout came from the grove Dion St. Mars felt that the ropes on his arms were being severed, while the voice whispered into his ear again, saying:

"Up to the tree with you when the fight commences."

At that time all was ready for the hanging-match, as the rope was suspended over the high branch, and Colonel Barclay yelled:

"Swing him up now in the face of his friends, and then we'll at the dogs in earnest."

Three of the troopers pulled on the rope and up went the prisoner.

Colonel Barclay saw his victim ascending to the branch, but he did not perceive that the active youth was aiding himself in the ascent with his own hands.

Then a yell of rage burst from the stern man as he turned

his eyes on his victim again, and he fired his pistol up in the tree, as he yelled:

"The scoundrel is going up into the tree and he is using his hands in climbing."

The prisoner was using his hands and feet, also, with good effect, as he was up in the thick branches before Colonel Barclay could yell out again:

"Fire up after the rascal and bring him down, and we must have traitors around us."

Dion St. Mars sent forth a mocking defiance as he disappeared in the thick branches above, crying:

"I am not destined to die on the gallows to-night, you merciless tyrant!"

Then old Molly Malloy's voice could be heard crying:

"Did I not tell you that the Silent Wolves were out again to-night, and that they would save their young chief from the gallows?"

Colonel Barclay became furious on hearing the voice of the defiant old woman again, and he ordered his men to send another volley up into the tree, crying:

"Guard here under the tree, some of you, and the others follow me into the house."

As the colonel led his men toward the front hallway he cast another glance upward, and he then noticed that one of the branches of the big tree spread over very near to an open window.

Leading his men into the hallway, he found the troopers inside attempting to force their way up the broad staircase, which was barricaded by beds, bureaus, and other articles of furniture.

The old soldier then knew that some of the rebels had entered the house in a secret manner, and that they were then holding the upper floors against the troopers first sent in at them.

One glance around told him that several of his men had fallen in the broad hallway, and that the rebels must have offered a strong resistance from behind the barricade above.

A dozen troopers rushed up with their officer, and the barricade was soon torn away.

Those in the upper part of the house did not appear to offer any resistance at the time, and the colonel reached the second floor with a score of his men.

Then a dense volume of smoke swept against them, out shot flames from the apartments near, and the stern old soldier was compelled to cry:

"Back, back, and get buckets of water to put out the fire. The infernal fiends are aiming to destroy my mansion to-night."

A loud shout burst from the troopers outside at that moment.

The colonel hastened out on the lawn with the ladies, and he could then perceive the Twenty Silent Wolves dashing away in compact order, their young leader shouting:

"I was not doomed to die to-night."

The infuriated old officer called on some of his troopers to charge after the Wolves, and he sprang on his own horse, crying:

"Put out the fire if you can, but I will away to crush the dogs who caused this destruction."

The old veteran was soon at the head of over fifty of the best mounted troopers, and they were riding away after the outlaws, sending forth their cries:

"Death to the Wolves!"

The daring riders did not appear to make for the mountain that night, as they dashed along through a wood skirting the high road.

Before the troopers had ridden two miles the silent riders

were out of sight in the deep wood, and the enraged colonel called a halt as he cried:

"The rascals are up to some more treacherous work to-night, and we must get back to receive them."

On reaching the lawn in front of the mansion, Colonel Barclay found several other soldiers striving to quench the fire and save the outhouses from destruction.

The outhouses were saved, but the fine old mansion was burned to the ground.

The enraged man found his nephew on the lawn with two young ladies, Marguerite St. Mars being still held as a prisoner.

Drawing his nephew aside, Colonel Barclay said to him:

"Can you imagine how the rascals got into the house while it was surrounded with the troops?"

"I cannot, sir. There must be a secret passage leading from the upper part of the house out into the grove."

"We will investigate it when the fire is put out."

"What will I do with the young French lady, sir?"

"Take her to the barracks and hold her as a prisoner, as she is a French spy."

"Would you not give me permission to bear her away to Dublin before the Wolves can rescue her?"

"No, as we will hold her there in the town and see if they will dare come to rescue her."

"Have I your permission to force her to become my wife, sir?"

"Yes, yes, if you can secure her fortune thereby and break her heart afterward."

The venomous old colonel waited to see his fine mansion burned to the ground, and he then retired to the barracks in the town.

Early on the following morning he received a note which read as follows:

"Colonel Barclay:

"Your son was fighting with the Silent Wolves last night, and he is a member of the band.

"If you attempt to punish or molest your niece and the young French lady, the Silent Wolves will avenge them. If you ever hope to see your son again let the young ladies go at once in peace.

MOLLY MALLOY."

There was intense excitement in the neighborhood during the day over the last work performed by the Silent Wolves.

On clearing away a portion of the ruins in Colonel Barclay's mansion it was discovered that there was a secret passage leading from thence out into the grove across the lawn.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CHANGE OF BASE.

The last outrage of the Silent Wolves, as it was called by the English officers, served to arouse the authorities to more vigor than ever.

Every road and footpath leading to the mountain was strictly guarded by strong parties of horse and foot soldiers, and large reinforcements were called in from other districts for that purpose.

Colonel Barclay searched almost every foot of the mountain for the secret hiding-place, and those engaged in the search were so placed as to be within the call of each other at the slightest notice.

The enraged man was embittered more against Dion St. Mars and Molly Malloy than any of the others.

He believed that the young French officer was at the head and front of the whole movement, and he was incensed against him also for the burning of his house.

The angry old officer felt that Molly Malloy had been humbugging him about his son, and that she had been acting as an able spy for the Silent Wolves throughout, as she was the only one who could know the secrets of the old mansion.

Colonel Barclay was also embittered against his sweet niece and Marguerite St. Mars, although he felt in his heart that the young French lady was not a spy.

He hated his niece for having married the young Frenchman who was the leader of the Wolves, and he swore that she would be a beggar after her husband was hung.

Colonel Barclay was also very bitter against Paul Rodney.

The mysterious escape of that gallant young fellow from the barracks could not be accounted for or explained, as Paul had walked out that evening disguised as a trooper, and it was suspected that two of his guards were in collusion with the rebels.

The young French lady and Olive were not kept as prisoners in the barracks, but they were so well watched at the hotel in the town that they found it impossible to escape for the time.

Captain Oscar Barclay endeavored to prevail on Marguerite to become his wife, but the young girl positively refused to accept the offer.

On the evening of the third day after the burning of the old mansion the young French girl and Olive were seated in the private sitting room of the hotel when one of the servant girls entered with their supper.

A soldier kept watch outside the door, several of them were stationed in the yard of the hotel, and the whole house fairly swarmed with redcoats.

When the young girl entered the room she closed the door after her, and turned to address the young lady, saying:

"You'll find the hot cakes very nice to-night, young ladies."

At that moment Marguerite St. Mars cut open one of the soft cakes, and then a slight exclamation of surprise in French escaped from her.

The young lady then drew a small note from between the slices of the cake, while the faithful servant girl moved to the door as she remarked:

"Ring the bell if you want anything else very soon, young ladies."

The note was written in French; it was from Marguerite's brother, and it contained the following words:

"The Silent Wolves are making a circuit, and they may see some of their old friends to-night. Be on the alert, and trust any one who may come to you with our password, which will be the

SILENT ONE."

The young girl heard a heavy footstep outside the door, and she had barely time to hide the note when Captain Oscar Barclay burst into the room, crying:

"I have news for you, ladies."

"What is it, Oscar?" inquired the sister.

"Colonel Barclay has orders to send you both to Dublin, and you will prepare for a journey at once. I am to escort you to the city."

Neither of the young ladies were pleased at the news, as they both had good reasons for desiring to remain in that neighborhood, while they were also aware that Oscar Barclay had sinister motives of his own for taking them to Dublin.

Giving orders to the young ladies to hasten and get ready for the journey, the young officer left the room again, saying:

"Your friends, the Silent Wolves, are hemmed in on all sides down near the coast, and I expect to hear of their total destruction every moment."

Sighs and groans escaped from the young lady, and Marguerite moved toward the door, as she moaned forth:

"Is there no escape from this tyranny? Oh, would that we could let our friends know about the journey, and they may rescue us on the road."

The soldier on guard outside, who appeared to be a tall, stout man with a full beard, made a significant motion to the young lady at the moment.

The gesture was familiar to Marguerite, and she replied with a smile, saying:

"Would that we had wings to fly, and you could not then hinder us from going out of the window."

The bearded soldier waited until Captain Oscar Barclay was downstairs, and he then put his head in at the door, holding up his left hand at the same time, as he said in very subdued tones:

"I am a friend, and I will assist you in getting wings to fly, or in getting your friends and my friends to assist in your rescue."

Marguerite clapped her hands joyfully, as she had recognized the voice on the instant.

Placing her own face close to the man's, she eagerly inquired:

"Are you not Paul Rodney?"

"I am," was the prompt reply.

"Then I feel that we will be saved; but what a fearful risk you are running coming here."

"The risk is not great in your behalf, dear young lady, and I would venture it a hundred times over."

"Then where is my brother?"

"He is in the deep wood not five miles from here with the Silent Wolves."

"Can you get a message to him, my good friend?"

"I will go myself."

"But how can you get away from here?"

"I will be relieved in half an hour, and then I will hasten away with your message, if you will tell me what you wish to say to him."

"Tell him that we are to be taken away to Dublin at once, and that he will lose his wife and sister both if he does not rescue us to-night."

"Then he will rescue you, young lady, and I will take part in the struggle."

In less than half an hour after that the two young women were driving out of town in a closed carriage, which was guarded by a troop of over fifty horsemen commanded by Colonel Barclay.

The stern colonel only intended to proceed on the first stage of the journey with the young ladies, as he was anxious to return to the barracks and keep up the hunt for the Silent Wolves.

Captain Oscar Barclay rode out with his sister and her friend, as he was to take charge of the party when his uncle returned.

They proposed to ride over twenty miles that night to a small village on the first stage of the journey.

Feeling assured that the Silent Wolves were hemmed in at a point along the coast some twenty-five miles away, Colonel Barclay proposed to send only a small escort with the ladies after passing out of the district.

But the Silent Wolves were not twenty-five miles away at the time.

When the troopers dashed along through a deep-wooded valley about five miles from the barracks, keen eyes were piercing out at them through the trees and noting their numbers.

Then along through the deep wood moved the silent cavalcade.

Along through side roads and short-cuts the weird-looking horsemen rode.

When the village was reached Colonel Barclay put up at

the principal tavern in the place, and the two young women were consigned to a bedroom on the second floor.

All through the journey Marguerite and her friend were on the lookout for the Silent Wolves.

When they sought their sleeping room, as if to rest, they peered out through a back window, while one said to the other:

"It will be dreadful if our friends do not appear to-night, and yet the struggle will be terrible if they succeed in rescuing us."

The young women did not dream of sleep as they sat at the window conversing in low tones and peering over at a small wood a short distance back from the tavern. Colonel Barclay and his nephew did not retire to rest.

They sat in the main room of the tavern talking about the strange events brought on by the Silent Wolves, and laying plans for their destruction and for securing the large estate that Marguerite St. Mars would inherit on the death of her brother.

Oscar Barclay was not aware that the colonel had a son living, and he fully believed that he would inherit his uncle's estate.

It was after twelve o'clock when an old woman with a hood drawn over her face entered the tavern, followed by another.

The last of the strangers wore a hood over her face also, and she appeared to be very weak and timid.

On perceiving Colonel Barclay the second woman started and staggered to a seat, gasping for breath as she whispered to her friend:

"I am dying, Molly, and the sooner it is over the better."

Colonel Barclay noticed the two women, and his suspicions were at once aroused.

Whispering a few words of caution to his nephew, he advanced on them, crying:

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

One of the women turned to face him on the instant, throwing back her hood as she cried:

"I am Molly Malloy, and I came here to see you."

"What did you come here for, then?" demanded the colonel, in savage tones.

"I came here to prove that your son is living."

"How can you prove it?"

"By a witness I have here who will not lie."

As the old woman spoke she pointed at the hooded figure, who was gasping for breath.

The second woman threw back her hood, and stared up at Colonel Barclay with deathly eyes as she gasped forth:

"Colonel Barclay, do you not know me?"

"Good heavens, can you be my wife?"

"Yes, Peter Barclay, I am your unhappy wife, and I am dying. Molly there will tell you the rest."

The amazed man stared at the dying woman, and then at Molly as he demanded:

"What have you to tell me?"

"I have to tell you about your son, and she will prove what I tell you is true."

"I thought she was dead long ago," hissed Colonel Barclay, as he glared at the dying woman in an angry manner.

"Don't talk that way to the dying," said old Molly, "but listen to what I have to say, as she can't speak for herself."

"Then go on, go on."

Old Molly then continued, saying:

"When your poor wife here was driven from her home by your cruelty, she didn't turn away with a Frenchman at all, as the man you fought with about her was only a friend. She came right here to Ireland to her own people, and she let you give out that she was a wicked woman sooner than ever live with you again."

"She has been living under a strange name and almost under your very nose for long years past. She brought up her son to be a noble, brave young fellow, and she taught him to love his mother's land and to hate the English tyrants."

"Is my son a rebel, then?" groaned Colonel Barclay.

"He is a rebel, for he fought against you at Bantry with the French. He fought against you again with the brave boys who are out lately to oppose your cruelty and injustice. There is not a better or a braver patriot in Ireland to-day than your son, you English tyrant, and it is proud I am to tell you of it. His name is Rodney."

Colonel Barclay started back and glared at the dying woman as he gasped forth:

"Is it possible then that my son is the young man known as Paul Rodney?"

"It is the solemn truth, as these papers and tokens will prove," gasped the dying creature, as she handed a packet to her husband.

The colonel had scarcely grasped the packet when shots were heard outside, followed by cries of alarm.

Then into the room burst a trooper, crying:

"The Wolves are on us again."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAST OF THE SILENT WOLVES.

Colonel Barclay had scarcely reached the door of the tavern when the Twenty Silent Wolves rode into the back yard, cutting down and slaying all who opposed them.

The two young women then rushed down the stairs, where they were soon met by Dion St. Mars and Paul Rodney in their wolfish disguises.

A few words from the young leader of the Wolves, and the two young women were led out into the back yard.

In through the front door rushed Colonel Barclay at the head of a dozen troopers, as he cried aloud:

"To arms, to arms, and let us meet the dogs like brave soldiers."

The young leader of the Wolves, with about ten of his followers, rushed at Colonel Barclay and his men as he cried:

"We will meet you for the last time now, Colonel Barclay."

Colonel Barclay faltered a little as he rushed to meet the Silent Wolves in the large room, and he then cried out:

"Is the young man known as Paul Rodney among you?"

The young leader of the Wolves waved his sword in defiance as he cried:

"Be silent, all!"

"Then here is at you to death," cried Colonel Barclay, as he dashed at the nearest Wolf.

A fierce and deadly struggle ensued, the combatants using their swords and sabers only.

The rough troopers could not cope with the expert swordsmen before them, however, and that deadly struggle was soon over, Colonel Barclay receiving a severe wound in the sword-arm from the young Frenchman whom he had twice condemned to death.

When the struggle was over one of the Wolves noticed the dying woman, and he advanced and knelt by her side to embrace her, as he inquired:

"Mother, darling, what brought you here?"

The dying woman embraced her son, and then turned to Colonel Barclay, as she exclaimed:

"Peter Barclay, he is your son, as I declare with my dying breath."

A fearful groan burst from Colonel Barclay as he recognized Paul Rodney, and he then cried:

"Did you not know that you were my son?"

"I didn't know it, sir, and I never want to know it, either, as I disown such a tyrant and cruel monster as you have proved yourself to be with my countrymen."

"If you are my son it is terrible, as I once condemned you to death."

The leader of the Wolves then advanced toward Colonel Barclay and flung back his disguise, saying:

"Sir, this is the last time we will meet for the present, as I am about to leave for France with my brave friends. Before parting, however, I wish to say a few words to you."

"Say on, then," said the colonel.

"I wish to tell you," continued the young leader of the Wolves, "that each and all of the Silent Wolves were French and French Irish officers who bore commissions in our army. When you hunted us down like wolves, slaying us and putting us to death without mercy after the retreat of our army, we banded together for retaliation and revenge."

"And you have had it," groaned Colonel Barclay.

"Yes, we have had revenge, but we fought you like honorable men. We are now about to leave Ireland, perhaps forever, and we are going to bear the young ladies with us whom you were treating in the most treacherous manner. Captain Oscar Barclay there deserves death at our hands for his treatment of my sister, but we will not follow your example in slaying helpless prisoners. We will now bid you adieu and we trust that your defeats will prove a lesson to you hereafter."

The young man kissed his mother again and then turned to Molly Malloy, saying:

"Give my mother a decent burial in the old churchyard."

"I will that, my brave boy."

The Silent Wolves were soon in motion again, and away they rode, bearing the two young women with them.

The Twenty Wolves embarked that night for France, taking the young women with them, not forgetting the gallant steeds who had borne them through so many brave fights.

They all reached France in safely, and Paul Rodney enlisted in the French army.

Colonel Barclay soon became convinced that Paul Rodney was his son, and he made several efforts at becoming reconciled with the young man.

But Paul refused to have anything to do with the cruel man, and he would not fight or live under the English flag.

He was rewarded for his fidelity in a very agreeable manner, as Marguerite St. Mars became his wife two years after they landed in France.

Captain Oscar Barclay was a miserable wreck of humanity when he partially recovered from his wounds, and he did not live many years thereafter.

Colonel Barclay retired from the army soon after a very sorrowful man, and strange to say, old Molly Malloy became his housekeeper and a great favorite.

The Twenty Wolves were never heard of thereafter in that country, but the aged peasants in the neighborhood told of their achievements many years after.

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